



ELSAH HISTORY

No. 64
and 65

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The Great Flood of 1993

Elsie as a community experienced some trying times during the summer of 1993. As the Great Flood of '93 invaded the privacy of the homes of its villagers and forced many to move out, it later also forced the Village to face the resulting effects. In a way, the Village as an entity suddenly had to 'grow up' and accept responsibilities beyond its previously protected, almost 19th century existence. In the process it lost some of its appealing innocence. In the rebuilding now under way, its concern has to be the preservation of as many of the gracious patterns of relationships that defined Elsie life, and that were so evident in the larger and smaller elements of Elsie architecture as possible.

Elsie also lost a good friend, Dr. Charles Hosmer, one whose concern with the preservation of America's past inspired us all to see and appreciate the beauty of the village we live in. Historic Elsie Foundation is grateful and was very fortunate that Chuck, as he is known to all of us, a nationally known authority on the history of preservation in the United States, so willingly and lovingly served as its president for the past twenty years. We miss him dearly, but intend to proceed, inspired by his enthusiasm, with the support of preservation in this community.

For every historic event there are as many interpretations as there are people who witnessed or experienced it. There may be some consensus on indisputable facts, but even those facts will be described in many different ways. Each individual will color various aspects of an event differently. When asked to share an experience that stood out during the flood with the Historic Elsie Foundation Newsletter, the villagers responded with a wonderful collection of stories that formed a beautiful quilt. The pattern of the quilt is unique. The shapes and colors are kaleidoscopic. The pieces are stitched together with strands of information gleaned from a taped interview with our mayor, Jane Pfeifer, and her husband David and their daughter and son-in-law, Edith and Arno List, and from conversations with Eleanor Barnal, Cy Bunting, Betty Clark (our postmaster), Rick Dearborn, Randy Kinder, and Jerry Taetz.

Every quilt has a border to set off the pattern and to unify it. The border of this quilt is made of a great sense of gratitude, evident in every shared experience, for so much loving concern expressed during the past difficult times by both neighbor and stranger.

Historic Elsau Foundation thanks everyone who contributed to this issue for the time given and the shared feelings and information, and for the loan of their photographs. We especially thank Mayor Jane Pfeifer for the generosity with which she supplied us with vital information and background logs and schedules. We also thank Jeralyn Hosmer for proofreading the texts and Dorothy Pendleton for typing the report.

When asked about their flood experiences in early February, several people mentioned that, yes, now they were ready to talk about it; had I inquired earlier it would have been too difficult to do.

Undoubtedly there are omissions of important events in this report, and possibly some mistakes – for these we sincerely apologize. So much happened, and so many were actively involved that it was impossible to mention all by name. The ones who were mentioned only give an indication of the tremendous diversity of those who helped.



The preservation of Farley's Music Hall, sponsored by Historic Elsau Foundation, is made possible by a generous "purchase" donation from an anonymous donor, and grants from the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency and the National Trust. The work is under the supervision of the St. Louis architect, Jack Luer.

PHOTO: RANDY KINDER

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The Firsts in Elsah

Through the many years in the history of Elsah, I am sure there have been things that never happened before. But, this is August, 1993 and within the last two months we have seen changes in this lovely little town that will alter the whole complex of our system. We have watched with concern and disbelief the Flood of '93. We have seen the FIRSTS OF ELSAH in these troubled times and I will record to the best of my ability, these many FIRSTS.

To begin with, the level of water in the village was beyond belief to outsiders. Of course, it came up slowly, but each day we recorded another high. The road at the entrance was the first to be covered and the water moved over the ground and street moving up Mill Street to the Corner Nest Bed and Breakfast and covered the entire yard below the Riverview House and below Mrs. Trovillion's home. It moved up Mill Street to Holt's brick home and beyond to Womack's and Unterbrink's. At this point it entered our Keller's Walnut Park (lot) and around Bell's home (former Mandorca). It moved on up past the Green Tree Bed and Breakfast to Ouderkirk's barn home, past Tom Sorbie's (his first home) to the intersection going up to the college. Then, next door, is the stone house of Wanamaker's which had water up to the window sills. Across the street is the Greer house (now the Deck house) where the water was almost up to the roof. The next house, Evans' home (formerly Bob Connell's) on the NW corner of Mill and Maple was surrounded and had more than two feet of water in the first floor. Next, the water came to the Farley Hall and the Keller-Taetz home, the Randy Kinder home, the Elsah Post Office and all around the school house (now the Elsah Civic Center) and up to Mary Tober's home. On LaSalle Street it took in the Christian Science Church parking lot and the church and went beyond to the Elsah Methodist Church.

The roads became covered with the water to depths where an oar could not reach to bottom. At first the only way to reach our south end of town was to drive from the Methodist Church past the Christian Science Church to the Maple Leaf Cottages on Maple Street. Finally, the water got so deep they put a rock road about a foot high in the middle of the street. This worked fine until the water covered it and it became too deep for car and man. Waist deep! The depth of the water could range from an inch to, I am sure, 15 feet deep some places in the village.

The most impressive exercise was the sandbagging. It was unbelievable how many people came to do the life-saving act of filling sandbags. At one time, I estimated way over 100 people working around the village to protect the homes. Trucks would appear with sand and dump in various places like the road or schoolhouse yard. Sometimes trucks would load the bags and take them to the home to be saved. The sandbaggers would stack the bags around the house away from the foundation, maybe four or five feet high. They were very helpful at the moment, but in time they became weak and fell in, flooding the home. At the end, there were three places that gave way all in the same night. Holt's, Green Tree Bed and Breakfast, and Randy Kinder's. This occurred because the power went off at 9:00 pm and so the many, many pumps that were being used stopped. Twenty-eight homes and buildings were now under water. Even the

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"The Jeep came in handy!" Genie and Ed Keller showing some friends what to video. (PHOTO: ANNE WILLIAMS); Front Cover: Looking at the Village of Elsah from the river, August 1st, 1993 (PHOTO: NIM GODFREY, IL)

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Christian Science Church had more than 2 inches of water. About this time the National Guard issued flood passes for each Elsah family so we could come and go through Elsah. Another FIRST.

In our time, this was the first experience of having to feed so many volunteers. This was done at the Civic Center (the old school). The Red Cross and Salvation Army sent food, and people from everywhere contributed food and money for this purpose. A clinic was set up in the lower room, along with the telephone center. The number of people who manned this service will probably never be known. Eventually, bottled water was distributed from this building. Also, for the first time, shots were given for tetanus to prevent infection. Oh yes, I forgot to mention that the drinking water was distributed in plastic jugs and in cans (like soda and beer). The Anheuser Busch Brewery provided the water in cans.

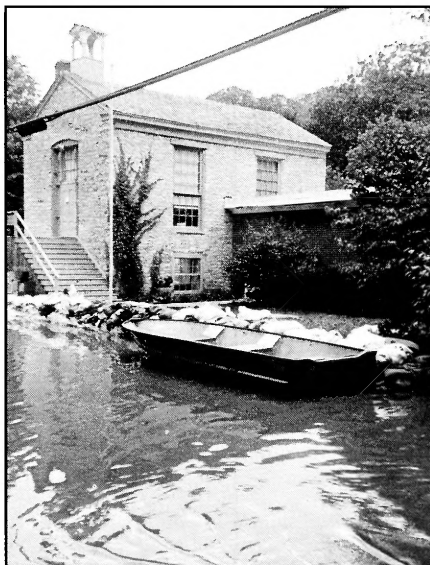
It would be impossible to list all the wonderful things that the Elsah people, Principia College, and people who gave of their time and talents did to protect our village. It was neighbor helping neighbor. The National Guard guarded our streets along with volunteer patrol people for the first time in the history of Elsah. On July 27, 1993, the Elsah Post Office was moved to Betty Clark's home on the Cemetery Road, into her garage, as the water was now on the floor of the Elsah building.

Among all the hardships that we endured are also fun things such as, the mallard ducks that lived for a week or two in Keller's Walnut Park. They enjoyed the shade of the trees and the peaceful lake that had been created on this lot. The amount of boats that appeared was amazing. The Keller boat that joined the fleet had been in our barn for over 35 years and when we put it in the water it sailed gracefully away. It is a wooden hull and took on amazingly little water and was used by us and others to view the various homes and to travel from here to there. In Randy Kinder's flooded yard was a beautiful red rose bush giving color to an otherwise blighted view. One could only get to the Civic Center (old school house) by boat so one could hear the click of oars almost anytime of the day or night. It was really strange to be able to row from the river up Mill Street to beyond the Post Office to the school building. We, here on the south part of LaSalle Street, were on an island! We could count Mrs. Trovillion, Ned and Paula Bradley, Genie and Ed Keller, Charlie, Carmen, and Brady Fyfe, Nancy McDow and Wayne Rowling, and Jerry and Patty Taetz for our population. We used the Principia fire lane from the picnic ground through the woods and fields to the top of the Chautauqua Road. The jeep came in handy! We left one car at Lou Federle's. This is a beautiful slow drive and we have seen some lovely deer as we traveled along.

We walked the street in the early morning, at noon and in the evening and found pleasure in the quiet part of town. I could mention many more incidents that occurred, but I must leave a little to your imagination. Not many villages in our area can count this many "FIRSTS" in their history! We learned a great deal during these weeks and we feel greatly blessed to have each other.

Genie and Ed Keller
22 LaSalle Street

Ed's grandfather came to Elsah around 1870. Ed served on the Village Board, and as mayor of Elsah from 1941-1970. Genie came from Alton.



*The Civic Center with the Boat
Landing*

PHOTO: BILL BROSS.

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"This is the Elsie Hot Line," and give the river stage, or information from the Army Corps of Engineers, or local news. The Command Center was also the base for the Boat Coordinator. As the water kept on rising, everyone wanted a boat, but there were only so many boats available. Several people had donated the use of their boats: Bob Smith loaned the village some, so did the County and Principia, and Cy Bunting offered the use of his canoe. One boat was kept at the front hill, and later one was kept at Valley Street, while Charlie Fyfe had the use of one at all times. Toward the end, for about a week, the Boat Landing was right there beyond the sandbag walls around the Center, with boats locked to trees or posts with chains and padlocks. The Boat Coordinator gave out boats twice a day – once in the morning and once at night. To make things easier, the boats and the keys to the locks were color coordinated.

Last but not least, the Command Center housed the kitchen. "It was the feeding center, where the local ladies put food together," (Randy Kinder), helped by their local husbands. Eleanor Barnal, Cora and Lee Stickler, June and Bob Cronin and others saw to it that everyone who sandbagged or helped in any other way was fed. The Command Center would call early in the day to report how many might be coming that day. Food was brought in and donated by many. Principia College furnished sandwiches, cookies, chips in small packages, ice. A lot of ice was needed in the hot weather. Hardy's from Jerseyville, and Lee's Chicken in St. Louis would call and bring over chicken, all prepared, ready to eat. Then the Landing and the Green Tree Inn, when they had to close, sent over perishables that were left. Eleanor Barnal remembers that, "I would call the Lane girls, Carolyn and Judy, and they supplied us. They brought individual cans of soda, and cookies and cakes all wrapped. Then there were the Besaws from Joywood, Stanley and Joanne, who brought bread and pies they had baked. And Jeri Hosmer came with homemade pies. Some people, like the Moody family, Dwight, Margaret and their son David and his wife Cathy, would bring fresh produce from their garden. Edith Pfeifer List brought tomatoes, and so it went."

Salvation Army and Red Cross

The Red Cross and the Salvation Army were two other sources of all kinds of supplies: cleaning kits, mops, personal hygiene kits, food, and rubber gloves for food distribution, and later bottled water. Jane Grundmann from Chautauqua, the representative of the Salvation

Army in this area, was extremely helpful. She would ask what was needed and then take care that it was delivered in their truck. Whole boxes of bananas and cookies would be sent. "The Salvation Army was our Salvation!" Randy Kinder claims. They also brought disinfectant to wash hands before eating, as the sandbaggers worked in highly polluted river-water.

Control Desk: Flood of 1993

I had the privilege to work at this desk for two weeks located in the lower room of the old stone Elsie School. My duties were:

A. Answering phones which rang constantly; answering questions, some very important and others just people wanting to talk, etc.

B. Making the time sheets for people to work at this desk which was open 24 hours a day - seven days a week. Trying to get people for night duty checking pumps and sandbags, called "Roamers," walking the streets or going in a boat.

C. Keeper of the boat keys, float lights, gloves, boats and radios. You had to sign them in and out.

D. Having people sign the worksheets (those who did sandbagging and who had other work duties).

E. Elsie residents came to the desk for messages. The telephones in the flood area were not working. Also, to leave messages for people who were trying to contact them.

I was happy to visit with several Elsie people who moved away and came to help fill sandbags and came to see the Mississippi River at an all-time water high. All people parked in upper Elsie by the fire house and vacant lot. They walked to this desk knowing the importance to keep the street clear.

The lower part of the village by the river to the Civic Center was cut off. The only way to get down town was by truck or boat. The road by the two churches was built up with gravel which helped some. I looked out the window one day and to my surprise saw my great niece, who is eleven years old, riding in the back of a dump truck. She was delivering a package to someone in lower Elsie and this truck was the only way to get there!

The first aid station was also at this control room. A section was fixed with the canvas voting booths to make it more private. Band-aids were a very important item. This room was air-conditioned so people would come to get cooled off before going back to filling sandbags.

I enjoyed every minute I worked at this desk.

Marie Cresswell
70 Mill Street

Both grandmothers of Marie were born in Elsie, and so was Marie.

Sandbagging

Not knowing much about sandbagging, Jane relied on Cy Bunting, Associate Director of Facilities at Principia College, for advice, "for he was the leader for the activity at the Gate Lodge, and he had seen the flood of 1973, so he knew a bit about sandbagging." While Cy advised and taught everyone how to do it, and helped build at the same time, Jim Prather did some surveying in order to know how high the predicted water would come and how high the sandbag walls would have to be.

Sand and bags were delivered at different sites, close to where they were needed. Again, sandbagging, filling and placing bags to build a wall to protect the buildings, was a 24 hour a day job, all week long. Soon everybody—

villagers, Principia students, faculty, staff and even Summer Sessioners, plus many volunteers who were perfect strangers—

was sandbagging in almost unbearably hot and muggy weather. The cry, "All I need is 500 bags" rang everywhere. But 500 bags did not go very far.

Randy Kinder and his neighbor Jerry Taetz decided to build one long levee across Mill Street, north of the bridge at Farley's. This way one levee could protect all structures north of it. Only, nature did not cooperate. That night, after heavy rains, a flash flood came down Mill Street toward the river and created a mini flood right behind this dike. It forced Randy and Jerry to abandon this idea and build individual sandbag walls around their properties along Mill Street. And thus, with the waxing water edging further and further north into the village, Mill Street Canal came into being.

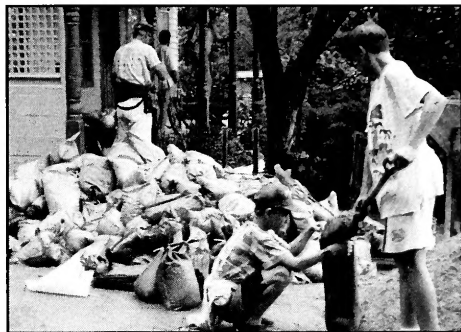
Everything was going so fast. They thought that Riverview could be saved if the water would go as high as '73. But then it was announced that the river would not go 33 feet, but 34, and so there was a whole group of new houses that would be touched by that. That's when they started sandbagging Holt and the two houses next to it, Doerr, Kinder, Taetz, the Post Office, and later the School. They built walls, and came back

again, always building the walls higher and higher. Randy Kinder and Jerry Taetz, with Principia at Riverview and the Pitchfords at the Green Tree Inn, were among the first, to do really serious sandbagging. "And literally all of them, everyone of them said, 'All you have to do, Jane, is say yes. We are going to put up just a little bitty wall to keep out the water. ALL I NEED IS 500 BAGS.' I don't know how many times people have said this to me."

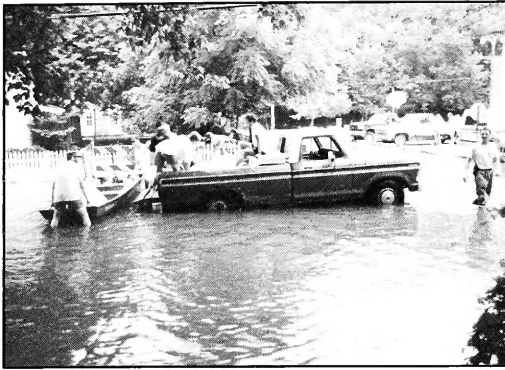
The state of Illinois had a commitment to helping in this Disaster. All agencies were to cooperate with

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Sand bag levee
Sand bags - $\frac{1}{2}$ or $\frac{3}{4}$ full
If wall is 4' high, base should be 6' wide.
Sand bags should be parallel to the water.
Bags should overlap like a brick wall.
Build like a pyramid.



Top: The filling of sandbags. PHOTO: NED BRADLEY
Bottom: Passing by hand. Left to right: Charlie Fyfe, Ben Schmidt, Randy Kinder. PHOTO: ANNE WILLIAMS



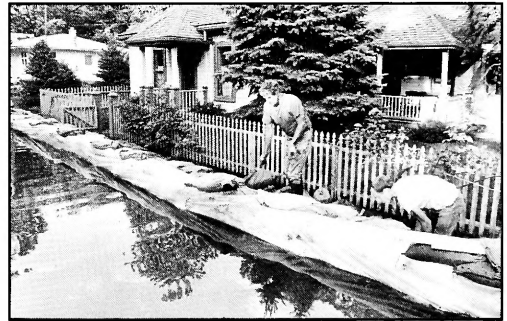
Top to Bottom: Transporting by Truck PHOTO: RANDY KINDER; By boat – in the water PHOTO: RANDY KINDER; Randy Kinder crossing Mill Street Canal PHOTO: ANNE WILLIAMS; building the sandbag walls. The two valiant Mill Street Canal Knights are Randy and Jerry, strengthening their fortifications. PHOTO: ANNE WILLIAMS.



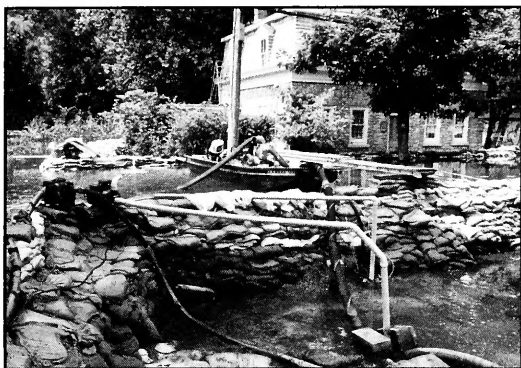
Marge and the Flood

The feeling of the 1993 flood was, for me, one of unreality. My little house stood in this spot, dry, since 1910. Nothing would reach her. As we sandbagged other houses, I wasn't worried. When we moved to Mill Street and made plans to sandbag my house, I still wasn't worried. That evening I did take up my flowers around the porch and move them to the back yard and to granite dishpans, knowing the bags would cover them. After the water covered my flowers front and back, I watched my tree trunk, filled with red geraniums and white petunias holding its own. I was out of my house, but I still had flowers. Finally, even those were drowned. I then looked at Sara Rockabrand's flowers for solace. After the water receded, I worked evenings until I could no longer stand the dirt and brown color everywhere. I would fix an iced tea and wander off looking for green grass and trees with leaves. The North's backyard was lovely, and the adirondack lawn chair comfortable. After a few weeks, I noticed two clematis plants in my backyard leafing out. A red climbing rose even bloomed one little rose for me before cold weather. They were saying, "We're still here." First thing on the spring agenda is new grass and new flowers.

Marjorie Doerr
25 Mill Street
Marjorie came to Elsay in 1985.



ESDA (Emergency Services and Disaster Agency). To obtain sand, gravel, or any other assistance Jane felt this agency could supply, she would call Larry Mead, the local coordinator for ESDA. "And he did a good job," volunteered David Pfeifer. Also, IDOT (Illinois Department of Transportation) assisted with many loads of gravel for La Salle Street and Alma to keep that



Intricate pump systems, with in the background Cy Bunting's fireboat and the bridge across Mill Street Canal.

PHOTO: RANDY KINDER

area passable. Jane continues, "Elsah asked for sandbags, sand and gravel. Sometimes Larry or another representative said no or they just did not come through. In those cases, when I felt the need was sufficient I used other resources. In the case of bags, we went to Granite City once—Principia went with a truck. And we picked up some in Jerseyville, the last ones they had, which were really feed-bags, fifty pound feed-bags. We had been asking for sand from the State, but the State at first did not give it to us. We had all these volunteers, and we had bags that could be filled, so we ordered from (Al) Gorman. They were very helpful, they came with load after load. Finally, after Nurwood broke, we suddenly could get State sand and State materials. Sand and gravel I ordered on the Village bill and sometimes individuals ordered sand themselves. The Village of Elsah was reimbursed 90% for these expenses much later under our FEMA Public Assistance Grant. However, at the time I did not know we would receive any reimbursement.

"Sandbagging private residences is a gray area in public policy. It is not an approved activity. However, I used the fact that this is an historic community which needs to be preserved as my justification. Since the Village was making the request, I was not questioned on this matter."

It is strange sometimes how pieces of life's puzzle fit. The fact that the mayor of Elsah felt vindicated in accommodating the preservation of private homes in Elsah - because the Village as a whole is a Designated Historic District - is the result of the persevering work of the late Dr. Charles B. Hosmer, Jr. His idealism manifested itself in untiring watchfulness to preserve the unique character of this village. It was he who, through patient research, was able to support the nomination of Elsah to be placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973. Thus, in this calamitous summer of 1993, while the river waters flooded our homes, he left us the benefit of a privileged treatment, and later, after the water receded, the opportunity to be considered for State and Federal Historic Grants to help rebuilding.



The splashing of pumps

PHOTO: NED BRADLEY

Pumps

While sandbagging kept floodwaters from entering the houses, the ground was so waterlogged that water seeped into the basements. To keep the water table in the basements at a safe level, pumps were installed. The aim was to keep the water level at about 2 1/2 feet below the floor above. Many pumps were needed all through the village. Principia had two gasoline pumps and bought four or five electric ones. The Village bought twelve electric pumps (sump pumps), and the villagers themselves bought pumps or rented them; some were donated. Cy Bunting rigged up a floating pump station by installing a fire pump and a gas sledge-pump in a boat. He put a black hose in the pumps and let it hang over the sides in the water, and a canvas fire hose lay folded in the boat. For a long time

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The Tingling Water and the Submerged Pump

Of the many nights I spent sandbagging down in Elsay, I remember this one particularly well.

The river level had risen so high that only trucks could drive through the water on the elevated road in front of the Christian Science Church. We used my truck to haul sandbags from the Civic Center over to the Unterbrink, Womack and Holt houses. Marty DeWindt had taken charge of a group of volunteers to beef up the sandbag walls around these houses. The river was still rising, and unless we built the walls higher, they would certainly collapse within a short period of time. The seepage in Karl Unterbrink's house was already so much that Cy Bunting decided we should put a portable fire pump on the porch of his house to pump out his basement. Once everything was set up, we only needed to check the fuel periodically. I had assumed this responsibility.

When I returned to check on the pump sometime later that night after taking a break, I heard that the wall around Unterbrink's and Womack's had just collapsed. Everybody had now moved over to the Holt House sandbag wall, since it was the only one still standing. When I asked whether anyone had taken care of the fire pump on the porch, no one knew. So, I went over to check it out. If it was still submerged, it was crucial to get it out as quickly as possible. I climbed over the sandbag wall and the fence onto the porch of the house. The pump was still there, submerged under three feet of water. The intake hose ran through the front door and down the stairs into the basement. To be able to pull out the pump, I had to go inside and retrieve the hose. Once inside, I noticed a strange tingling on my legs. It wasn't too strong, but still irritating. The first thought that came to mind was insects - but could they be underwater? Or fish perhaps? Suddenly it dawned on me that the electricity must still have been on in the house. I must have been close to a wall socket. The closer to the wall I got, the stronger the tingling. I quickly pulled up the hose from the basement and left the house.

Once outside, a volunteer helped me lift the portable pump onto the dry road. Now the real work started. It was about 10 p.m., and the water had to be drained out of the pump. The air filter, carburetor, and exhaust came off. The crankcase had to be drained of the oil-water emulsion. Together with David Cornell, I dismantled the parts, cleaned, and carefully dried them. All of this was done under a street light and with the help of a flash light. By then, the road around the pump was slippery from all the drained oil. In addition to having to watch our step, we found ourselves fending off the continuous attacks of mosquitoes. Insect repellent did not seem to be doing the job. After an hour or two, we got the engine together again and were ready to start it. For some reason, it wouldn't run. Possibly, there was still some moisture in the carburetor. At this point we decided to give up for the night. I felt like I needed a rest and especially a shower.

The next day, however, I was happy to see the pump in operation again, after Dale Klein from Physical Plant had fixed the problem, and got it to work again. From then on we kept the pump in the Biology Department's johnboat. This prevented the pump from being submerged in water again, and it was far easier to transport. By then, most of lower Elsay was flooded anyway, and running through the Village with a motor boat was not so unusual anymore.

Arno List

Principia College

Arno came to Principia College in 1990 as an International Student.

After Arno and Edith Pfeifer were married in 1991, they lived for seven months in Elsay.

Volunteers	In July 24 continued
Lat. July 24	Lucas Zager
all from campus	Bombardier #440
Charles Burns	John Hoff
Marie Olson	Ben Campbell
Gary Joome	Jon Larson left
David Loozide	Wanig Carit
Carly Olson	Jon Larson
Carolyn Robertson	Jo
John & Mary Kline	Erithia Peterson
Auto Service delbach	Sue Alding
Tom Delbach	Wm. Vasselt
David Winkler	St. Quill College
Tim Green	Robert Olson
College delbach	Burton Bellamy
Wendy Green	Markus Mall
and Tim	
Arno List	
Edith Pfeifer	

The Valiant Volunteers of Nine-three

You came to our rescue,
Each child, woman, man
With caring, warm hearts
And with sturdy, strong hands.
From far and from near, you
Came, new friends and old:
A sandbag to fill
A baby to hold
A quick lunch to serve
A levee to heap
A tired pump to coax
A vigil to keep
A tourist to caution
A level to "guess"
A mop and a shovel
To clean up the mess
And Elsay survived
So that others can see
That your hope and your nerve
Beat the Flood of Nine-Three.

Mary North
July 22, 1993

Moving Out

Here are some of our memories of the "Flood of '93," as it's being called - learning how to sandbag, wade through our house, navigate canoes under power lines and over stop signs, patrol the streets/canals of Elsie watching out for looters and leaks in sandbag walls, and work with unselfish volunteers who came from all over the country (and nearby) to lend a hand. It is the memory of how everyone worked together (sometimes in water up to their necks) that will stay with us.

On Thursday morning July 8th, the mayor of Elsie called us to ask if we would be willing to move out. Even though our house had never been flooded to our knowledge, we said

that we would be willing as the water was rising at the other end of town. Well, about 15 minutes later, we got a call to move. By 10 o'clock that night with the help of twenty friends, we were moved out, except for some items left in high cabinets. At that time it was a possibility that the house might get a few inches inside. (For future reference, if you think your house is going to flood, take everything out. Even if the water doesn't reach the items, the mildew will.)

As of July 17th, the water was almost up to the kitchen counter. We went into the house trying to avoid the snakes sunning themselves on the cistern cover floating in the backyard. The water was so murky that we couldn't see the floor. When Craig tried to save some items up high in our bedroom closets, he kicked something on the floor and couldn't figure out what it was because he thought we had gotten everything off the floor. He kicked a little harder and a floor board floated to the surface of the water. At that point, we decided it wasn't worth falling through the floor into our cellar ten feet below to save anything else in that room. We took as much as we could at that time thinking the water wouldn't go any higher. At that point, we waded into the garage. We tried to keep our recycling and cleaning supplies from floating out the door as we lifted our patio furniture and barbecue onto the roof of our garage where it stayed until the water receded.

As the water rose still higher, a rescue effort was made to save those items that were put on the window-sills and only four feet up in the garage. A reporter accompanied us in a boat we borrowed and took photos of us pulling up to the window, Craig climbing in, us loading up plants, lawn mower, weed wacker, etc... A photo of us in the boat with all the plants was in the Spokane, Washington newspaper.

In early August at the peak of the last crest, there was five feet of water in the house and the water level in the garage was over our heads. During that time we spent some nights down in Elsie patrolling in boats with the snakes and loud bullfrogs. There was a real sense of camaraderie as everyone worked together.

The hardest part for us was going back into the home after the water had receded. It was very discouraging to look at the crumbling mildewed walls and swollen floors covered with mud and dead fish, not to mention many of our things coated in sludge. That was the low point.

The construction crew from Principia College completely restored the house, making many needed improvements. While the historical exterior stone walls were preserved, the whole interior of the house was gutted and rebuilt with new wiring, plumbing, fixtures, cabinets, central air conditioning, and everything else. We have been able to repair or replace everything we needed to and have discovered that there are many things we just don't need. Because of the flood, we have gained a greater sense of what's really important, a desire for a simpler life style, and a close relationship with our neighbors.

Tori and Craig Fredrickson
27 Mill Street

The Fredericksons moved to Elsie in 1991, though Craig came to Principia in 1981.

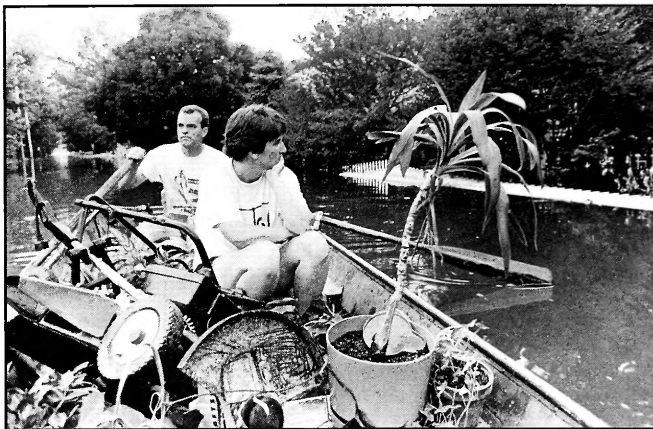


PHOTO: ANNE WILLIAMS

the boat was tied up across Mill Street between Randy Kinder's and Jerry Taetz' house.

While Cy Bunting and Jim Prather and Arno List, an international student at Prin, worked with the pumps, Russ Allison, the other Associate Director of Facilities at Principia College, was a go-between, getting supplies. At one time there were close to 25 pumps going, "and at the height before the wall broke, we were pulling 5000 gallons of water a minute out of the basement of Riverview alone," David Pfeifer remembered. The noise of these pumps, all day and all night long, was like 20 to 30 lawnmowers starting and stopping. Mixed with it was the sound of a backhoe and the rumble of the trucks transporting sand and sandbags. The counterpoint to these base rumbles were the cheery voices of the many volunteers who helped load and unload, and the splashing of the water from the pumps into the floodwater. Where the water was too deep for the trucks to go, the backhoe could go; and Principia had a big one that could drive through three to four feet of water. When even the backhoe could not be used anymore, either because the water was too deep or the ground too soggy, the bags were loaded onto boats and thus transported to their destination.

Moving Out

Before a house was seriously threatened by the rising floodwater and sandbagging around the building was in full force, it was time to move out. A thing Jane kept on saying, and nobody followed except Mary Tober, was: "Now you have to move everything out because if the wall breaks you want to be all right. Look at it this way - you win either way. If the water doesn't come in, well, that is O.K. If the water does come in you are still O.K. So you are winning both ways. So, take everything out. They all said, 'Oh yes, we have taken everything out.' But then, water is coming in and we are there ankle deep pulling stuff from the walls and moving it to safety. Mary Tober is the only one who took everything out, and the water at the crest just came to the floorboards, and then it went down."

The furniture was either moved up to the second floor or out, possibly into a La Salle Street garage, or as in the case of the Ouderkirks and several others into the space of the Village Hall. It must have made the Hall feel good to be part of Village Happenings again! Ben Schmidt and Arno List would do much of the moving and carrying. And Bill Bross was always ready to help in any way necessary. Those who had to leave their home were taken in by friends, or if they were Principia

Gate Lodge

One of our memories of the flood was the change of fauna around our house, the Gate Lodge. The songs of the American toad and the bullfrogs got closer and closer and louder and louder. Herons flew right by us and ducks swam in "Lake Elsayh."

Once on a beautiful day, a visitor and I were sitting in the living room with the front door wide open. At this point, the water was over the bridge and up the first three steps of our front yard. As we sat chatting, suddenly our young cat pranced proudly into the house with an 8 inch fish in her mouth. Imagine fishing right outside your door!

At 7 a.m. July 5th, my husband and I were wondering if we shouldn't have a plan for leaving. At that very moment, Jim Prather from Principia, came to our door and said we needed to evacuate. He said he would round up help and that we should call family and friends, too. By noon, all the furniture was out and everything else at least counter height. There must have been 30 helpers plus the box van. We did go back six more times ourselves when it became clear that we should get everything out. The last few times were by johnboat.

When the helpers came to the piano, I thought maybe we could just put it up on blocks since it's such a project, moving a piano. We didn't even know for sure then that the water would actually come in the house. We thought we'd only have to be out for a few days. Casey Reynolds was helping, and he said firmly that we should get the piano out now. We did.

A day later we couldn't have moved the furniture out as easily as we did that day, let alone the piano. So often since then I've been grateful for Casey's strong direction, especially when my husband and I canoed around the Gate Lodge and could have stepped on the roof. The water got up to the gutters. Blocks certainly wouldn't have helped the piano!

So many people did so much for us. We were so thankful for all the help and for a place to stay and a place to store our furniture. What an unforgettable summer.

Kat Collins and Rod Booth

The Gate Lodge

Kat and Rod lived in the Gate Lodge from October, 1991 to July 5, 1993.

On Our Watch

Coming down the hill that night into the Village I parked my car by the guardrail without much concern for other traffic - there would be none since the four-way stop was five to six feet deep in water. It was a few minutes before eight o'clock and the sky was just beginning to darken. The gentle lap of filthy river water against the row boat invited me to climb in and wait for my two companions.

Mosquitoes were already biting my ankles and I was sorry I'd neglected to wear socks. I fended them off with a fanning motion while I surveyed the prospect ahead. We would be three women in a row boat paddling through the small Village of Elsie for the eight to eleven "watch." Our purpose? To keep looters at bay and be alert to the needs of stranded residents.

Our tools? One questionable middle-aged row boat, three inexperienced rowers and a walkie-talkie connected to the gate house at Principia College - an awesome show of force we were not, but still it was a not to be missed, once in a lifetime experience.

Within minutes my friends arrived and we set off through the dusk. We headed left down Mill Street figuring it would be good to stay in wide open spaces until we got the feel of the oars. We passed the Fredricksons' place and Marjorie Doerr's with the water just inches below the top of the front windows. How bizarre to look at the roof level of our neighbors' houses and how eerie it felt with submerged trees poking their upper branches out of the water as if trying to breathe. We speculated on which ones looked dead and which ones would pull through.

We all agreed to pull into my house so I could grab a pair of socks - for in our move out we'd left most everything behind and only taken necessary clothes - like going on a nice little trip for a week. My cucumbers were still thriving and there were a few ripe tomatoes to harvest. We grabbed them but they rolled around the bottom of the boat the rest of the night.

Finally we headed out to the River. It was getting dark by then. A quarter moon had come up and was giving us a pretty impressive view of how strong the current was out in the main stream. We all agreed that our skills were not up to battling that rush of water. Yet we longed to edge as close to it as possible just to get some peek at the expanse of water and the bluffs with no River Road in view. We made it out to the telephone in the parking area at the Village entrance - we knew it was the phone by the bell on the sign still poking its head above water.

Suddenly one of the women said, "What's that?" We all strained our eyes to look where she was pointing. Sure enough, in the last faint glimmers of light from the sun we could discern a wake of water coming downstream. "Is it a boat?" the other woman asked. "We'd better wait here and see," I said. "Well, what if it is? We don't want to tangle with some men in a motorboat," the first woman said. So we pulled the boat back a little into the cove, to hide and watch. The wake continued but it didn't get any closer. We thought about calling the gate house to let them know we'd spotted something, but decided to watch another minute. Finally we got up the courage to paddle a little closer. Almost at the same moment we all began to laugh. We could see clearly now that it was merely the top point angle of one of the large orange diamond shaped traffic signs along the River Road. As water rushed past it created a wake.

Pleased with our bravery and relieved by the lack of danger, yet a little deflated by the missed opportunity for adventure and heroism we rowed back to Riverview House and scrambled up on the roof. We'd heard the view was great from up there. We didn't stay but a moment though because we still had to check the pumps at the Church and see how the Pitchfords were holding up. Most all the sandbag walls had failed already so the night was devoid of the roar of engines pumping till we got toward Valley Street. Debris, boards, bottles, and random household objects knocked gently against the side of the boat as we completed our rounds without incident. To think that this watch went on by foot and/or by boat for several weeks, maybe months, all through the night. It makes one value his neighbors and friends a bit more, and contemplate that such love is bigger than any river or flood could ever be.

Susan Mack

Eric and Susan Mack

16 LaSalle Street

Eric came to Elsie as a youngster with his parents in 1958. After their marriage, Susan and Eric moved to 16 LaSalle Street, in the Spring of 1986.

8P-6A Village Row Schedule		NIGHT TIME
Tuesday 7/27		Saturday 7/21
00 - 11:00 Don Perkins	8 - 11 Bob Brown	
00 - 4:00 Don Perkins	11 - 5 Don Perkins	
00 - 6:00 Don Perkins	5 - 6 Don Perkins	
Wednesday 7/28		Sunday 7/29
6 - 11 Don Perkins	8 - 11 Don Perkins	
6 - 11 Don Perkins	11 - 5 Don Perkins	
6 - 11 Don Perkins	5 - 6 Don Perkins	

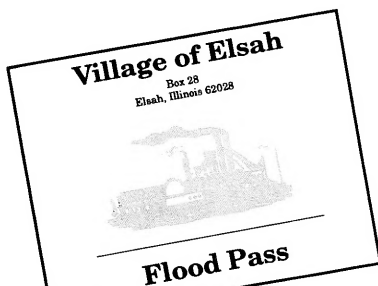
renters were housed on campus in Gehner for the time being.

The Guards

Around the middle of July it was decided that the Village needed around-the-clock people to 'watch' the empty houses. There had been reports of theft, some in Grafton and some at Piasa Harbor. Besides, the levees and the pumps also needed to be checked, to be sure that they were not leaking or breaking, and that the pumps were properly working. The word would get out that there was a need for volunteers to patrol the village, and many would come. The Rovers, as they were called, would walk or row a boat through the village, carrying flashlights and a walkie-talkie. Every hour on the hour they would report to the Principia Front Gate to check in how things were going, or to report if something came up. The Rovers were the 'village guard.'

The Village also requested the services of the National Guard to control the access to its center. Every night for about two weeks two National Guardsmen came at about eight o'clock in the evening and stayed until

Continued on Page 15



Flood of 1993

Instructions for persons roving the Village

The purpose of the rover is to watch and be the night eyes of the Village. It is never the job of the rover to confront any situation without specific instructions to do so.

During this very high water, when much of the Village is isolated, a boat is necessary. Therefore, boats placed around the Village are available (obtain a key). The pair should go to the isolated parts by boat-particularly the mouth end of LaSalle and walk along the road.

1. Every hour call the front gate to say you are alright.
2. All rovers must be in pairs.

If for any reason one member of the pair does not appear as expected, the second member should call the front gate on the radio and the front gate will give further instructions on consulting with Jane Pfeiffer.

3. Boats must ONLY follow the streets to avoid any wires.
4. ALWAYS wear life jackets.
5. NEVER go out in a boat during a storm where there is ANY sign of lightning or thunder.
6. NEVER go out near the River Road. The current is much too fast.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP.

Whitecaps and Waves

Riverview: The oldest home in Elsah, IL located 200 feet from the banks of the great Mississippi River.

On July 7, 1993 flood waters reached a level within 18 inches of our living room floor. The decision was made to begin construction of a massive 10,000 sandbag levee - 200 feet long and 7 feet high - around the entire home.

A Strange Phenomenon. Several days after completion of this imposing structure, I was working alone in the home, on the second floor, packing our belongings and preparing for the inevitable move to storage. The family had already been evacuated, and I had remained behind to monitor the protective wall, and help maintain the 30,000 gallon per hour gasoline sump pump.

By this time water was already lapping five feet against the front wall, and the town's labor force of volunteers had moved on - helping to bolster the walls around other homes coming under siege. Suddenly the room began to darken and as I glanced out of the front windows facing the river, I was startled to see a massive, threatening black cloud, coming from across and down the river - and heading directly for Riverview. Immediately, I thought - "Tornado!"

There was no one around, for my end of town had literally been deserted! Next came the winds in full force - not as in a tornado, but rather in the force and style of a hurricane, which I had had experience with before. The house began to rock, the windows creaked, and two glass windows blew out. Large branches hit the roof of the house from the Cottonwood tree only a few feet away. The sky grew darker. I was intrigued, but not frightened. I held my position with a throw-away Kodak camera, aimed at the storm, when I witnessed 'the phenomenon' - coming across River Road and the front parking lot (then three to four feet under water) - three-foot waves, with whitecaps, striking the front sandbag wall. For about ten minutes the waves battered the wall, splashing water up in the air like water hitting an ocean seawall!

Suddenly, it was over. Total calm prevailed. All was silent. The wall had held up. Not one other person (to my knowledge) was around to witness this event. No one in inner Elsah had felt its fury. Some said they'd noticed a little wind and rain!

The next day the newspapers disclosed that West Alton had been all but destroyed by a tornado.

On July 18th at 2:00 am our sandbag wall collapsed. The water pressure catapulted me towards the ceiling of the living room, and instantly filled with five and one half feet of murky water, gradually rising to seven feet.

It was all over. The Great River had conquered! My camera was lost in the flood.

Charlie Fyfe

Charles and Carmen Fyfe
2 Mississippi Street
The Fyfes came to Elsah in 1986.

daybreak. They came in a Hummer, a jeep shaped like a johnboat, and were stationed at the fork of Mill Street and Cemetery Road to watch the entrance into the village. Nobody could come through without a Flood Pass. These Flood Passes were beautifully printed green slips of paper, ordered by the Village and printed by the Support Center at Principia College. Everyone in the village received one. It was your passport home once you had left.

The Escape Route

It was Jim Prather again, who, the 15th of July or so, came to the Pfeifers' house and warned Jane the crest was expected that coming weekend, and, "then, there is no way for those people on La Salle Street to get out, unless you raise that street." Thus, with gravel ordered from Gorman and many loads delivered from the Illinois Department of Transportation, lower La Salle, the road in front of the two churches, and Alma were raised three feet. Eventually though, the water flooded even that road, and the people had to boat across and leave their cars parked past the Civic Center by the Fire House. Or they could use the escape route via Palm Street and over the hills of the picnic grounds out to the farm. This route though was not without its own dangers, as some discovered. One could also, as Nancy McDow once did coming home from the beauty shop and not finding a National Guardsman with the Hummer to ferry her across, race the rising water and wade through it in hip boots.

The River

While the river rushed past the village, the water in the village was relatively calm. There was some current, but not until one went past Elm Street toward the river. Your eye, used to seeing small hills and dales, ups and downs, all through the village, now met one large flat surface, smooth and shiny as glass. The water was dirty and polluted. None of the treatment plants along the river were working and all the wastewater was discharged into the river. This did not deter the blue herons, or the catfish, the frogs and water snakes, or the mosquitoes from looking for new homesteads in Elsah. There was a lot of debris in the water, a lot of driftwood, and also some railroad ties from around the parking place of the Ouderkirks, and of course all of Randy Kinder's firewood. Randy's wood, which was stacked so nicely before the flood, went afloat and just went all through Elsah. Randy collected it though, and picked it all up again.



*Top: The first escape route;
above: The water around the Green Tree Inn;
below: Mill Street Canal
after the first crest, July 17*

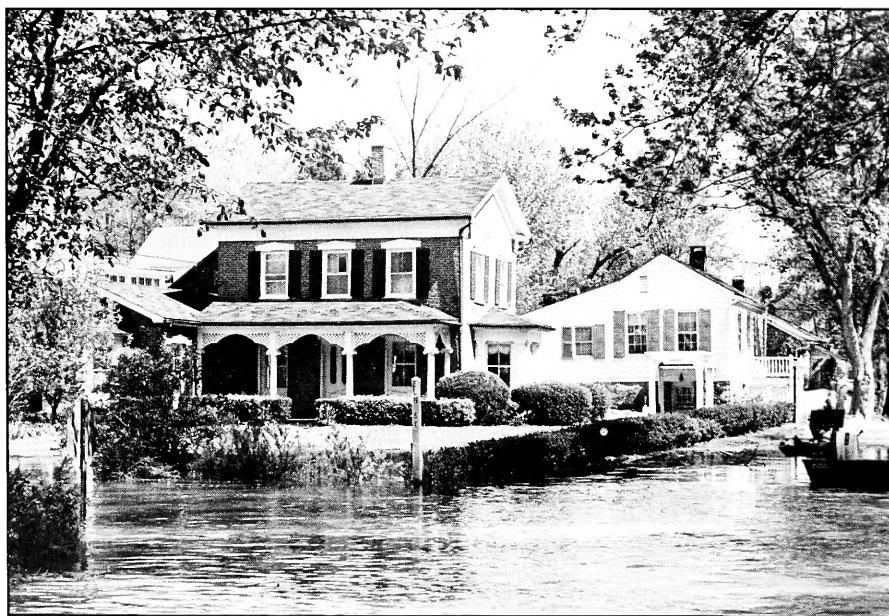
PHOTOS: (TOP) RANDY KINDER; (ABOVE AND BELOW) GRETCHEN BATZ



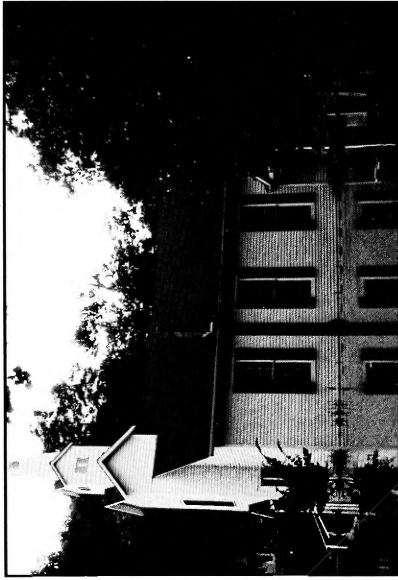
The Superflood of 1973



A view of Riverview
at the crest
< in 1973
and in 1993>



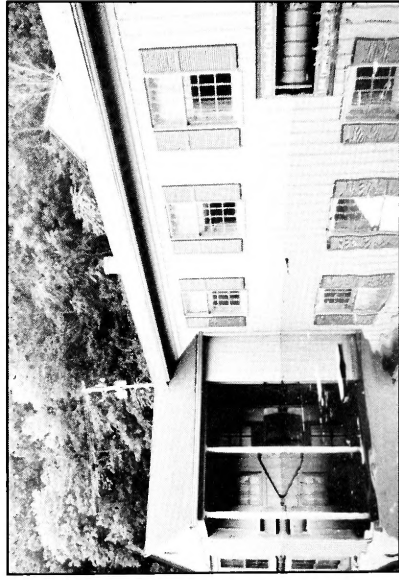
All photos by Edith Pfeifer List, taken on August 1, 1993.



Methodist Church, 2 Valley



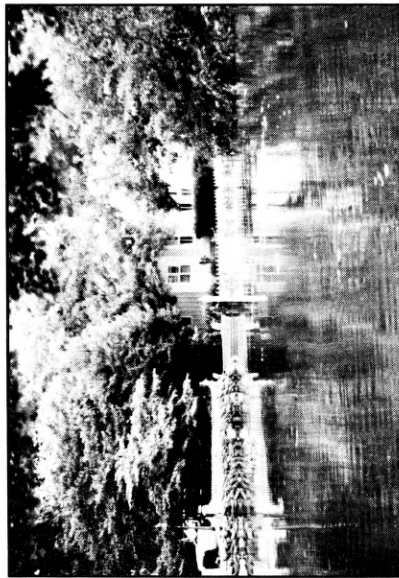
Christian Science Sunday School, La Salle



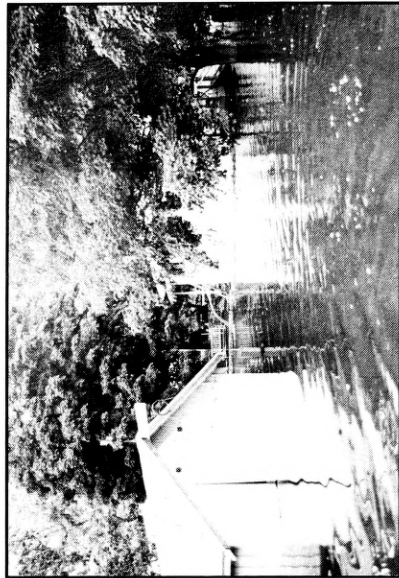
Christian Science Church, 53 LaSalle



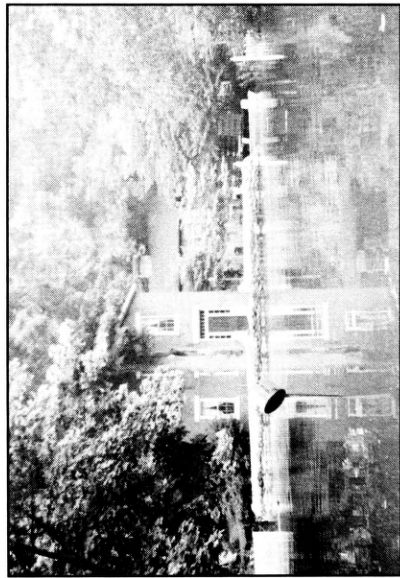
2 Alma



7 Valley



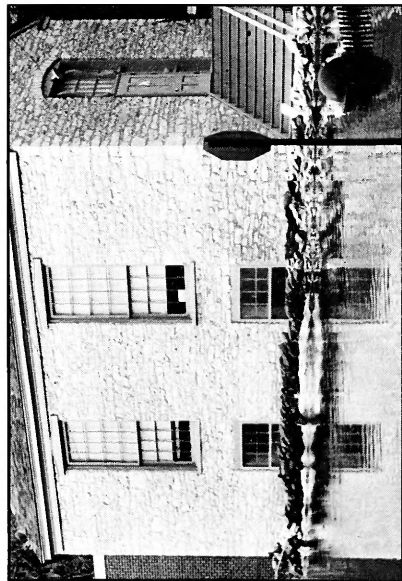
Maple Street



5 Valley



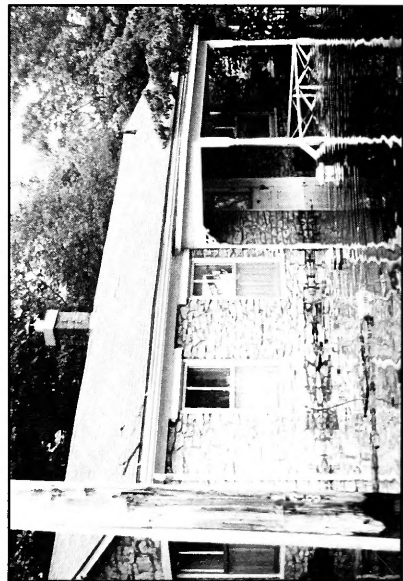
1 Mississippi, Gate Lodge



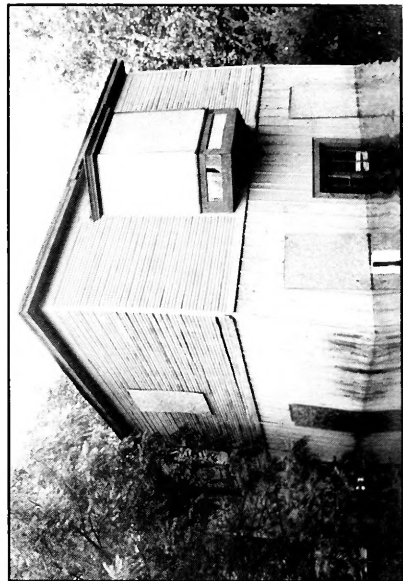
Elsie School, Civic Center, 51 Mill



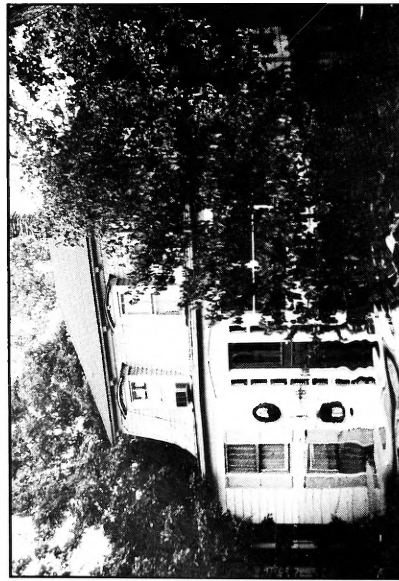
43 Mill



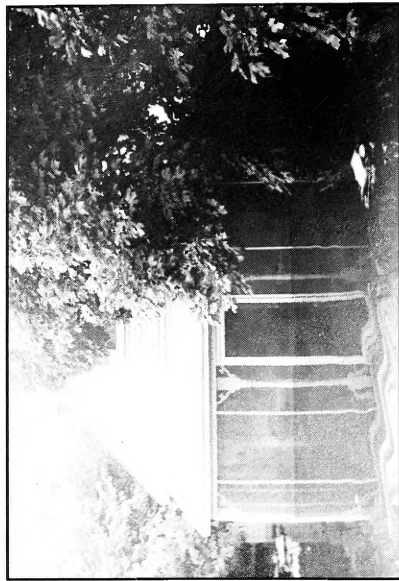
47 Mill



Farley's Music Hall, 37 Mill



2 Maple



25 Mill



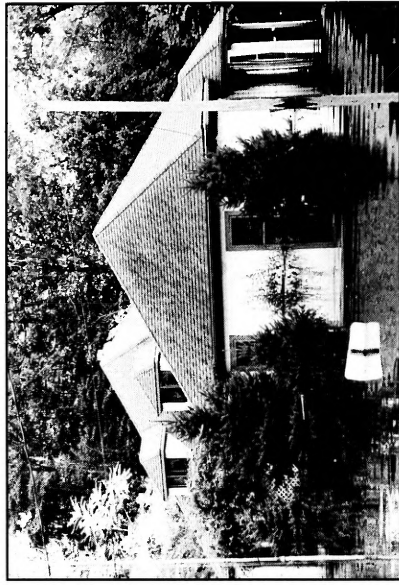
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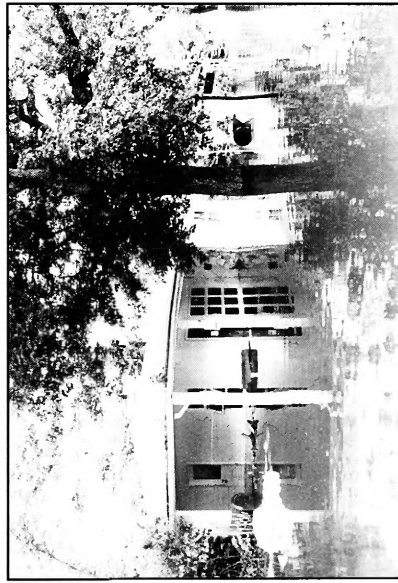
10 Selma



50 Mill



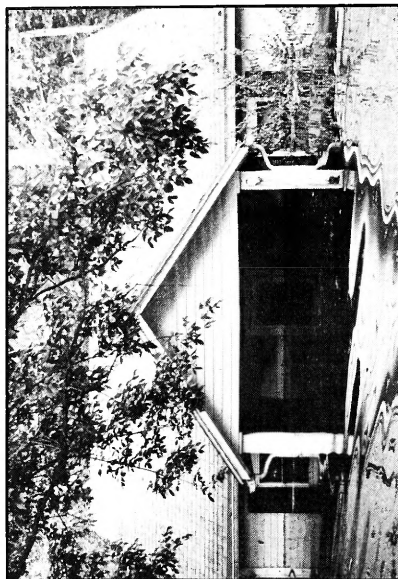
44 Mill



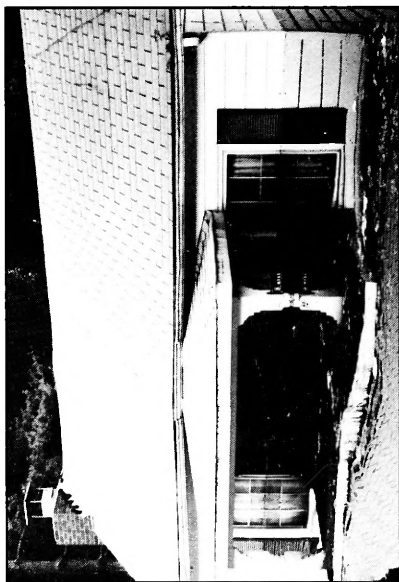
Post Office, 48 Mill



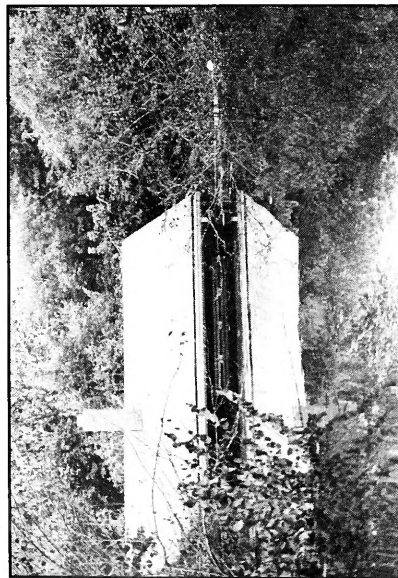
44 Mill (Garage)



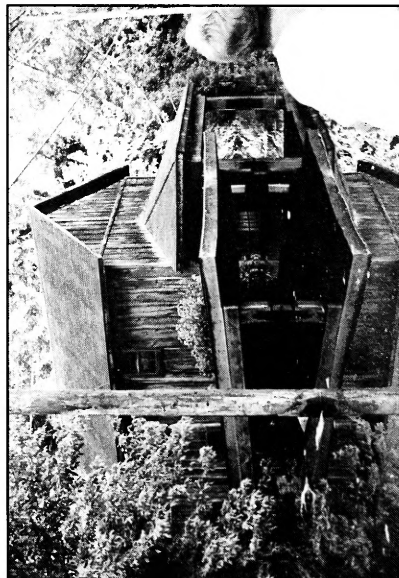
18 Mill



8 Mill



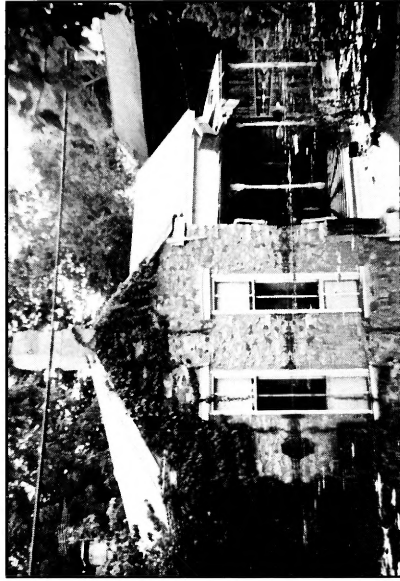
28 Mill



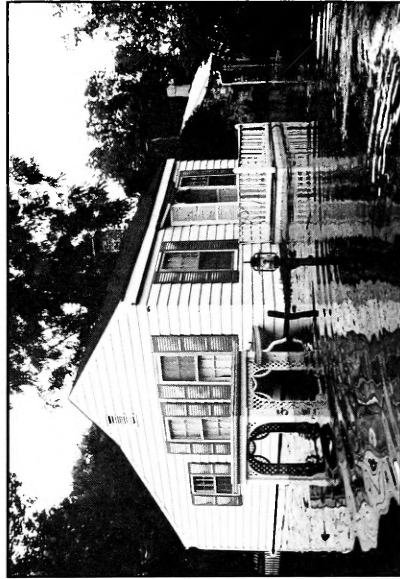
22 Mill



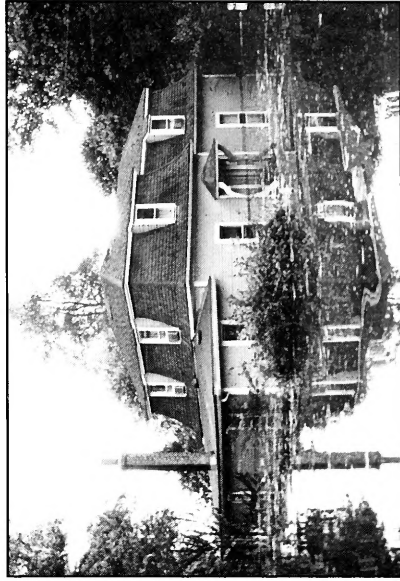
Green Tree Inn, 17 Mill



7 Mill



5 Mill



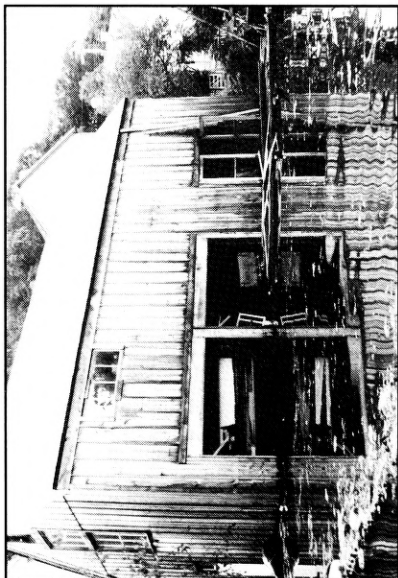
3 Elm



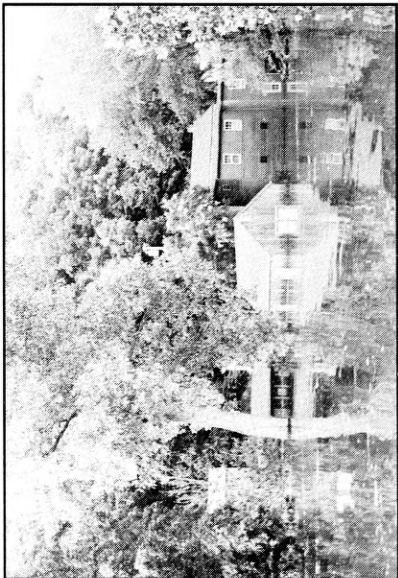
Alley behind Holt House



14 La Salle



16 La Salle



10 La Salle

The Great Flood of 1993



A view of Holt House
at the crest
< in 1973
and in 1993>





Looking towards the four-way stop.

PHOTO: GRETCHEN BATZ

Swimming the "Hellespont"

I had many fun and exciting experiences with the flood this summer. The work was tough, but the spirit of everyone was so inspiring that it always made everything so new and exciting.

I would have to say that the most interesting, yet funny experience that I had this summer involving the flood, was a night where I needed to get home from the college, and had been offered a ride. Now, when we got to the top of the hill, of course, there were barricades, and my friend let me off there, but what I didn't know was that when I got to the bottom of the hill, I would have to swim across the four-way stop. I wrapped my towel around my neck (which got wet anyway), took my shoes off (which were thongs in this case) and swam across the four-way stop. I figured that if I swam towards my house, I would have to go underwater at Randy Kinder's home because of the bridge he had made, so I decided to swim completely across and got to standing depth around the church parking lot. Then from there I walked home almost always in water.

This was a very funny, scary experience. I could hardly see what was in front of me, and when something moved I got very frightened just because of the over-population of snakes, but I did make it home safely, for which I was very grateful. Once again, this was a very fun and exciting experience for me, but I hope it never happens again.

Brad Rockabrand, high school student
56 Mill Street

Brad was born here. His parents came to Elsah in 1976.

Memories of the Flood of '93

I have many memories too numerous to put in writing, therefore, will mention only a few!

I never expected it would be as high as it was in Elsah. It just could not happen in Elsah.

The flood of 1973 at its highest was like a resort. Principia students swimming and rowing boats at the intersection of Mill and Maple Streets. 1993 was different, a river on the main street.

Every morning I would listen to hear the pumps running. The morning when it was so quiet, it was an eerie feeling knowing the Mighty Mississippi had won! All the sandbagging was in vain. Eddie Keller and I paddled up Mill Street. You could not touch the roadway with an oar. Hip boots were now Elsah tennis shoes.

In Grafton, I rode a boat on the main street and the water was so high you had to duck your head under light and telephone wires to go into the main river to find a street to come back to the main street.

Later, dumpsters were put all around Elsah. They were well used when people were cleaning out.

I had jugs of water and canned water to use when our local water plant was flooded. Johnny on the Spots were placed at the shopping mall and various other places in Alton. People lined up to get cases of drinking water and fill their gallon jugs with water.

I was fortunate to live on the upper street of Elsah, yet it was a worry to get to the other end of town. The weekend of the highest water, I had my friend's pick-up truck parked at Marie Cresswell's about six blocks from my home.

But, it was never too high that I could not make it to the beauty shop! On Saturday morning I rode on the National Guard hummer carrying my hip boots. On my return trip I waded home past the Christian Science Church on the road that was built up, but that was too deep to drive over. With my hip boots pulled as high as possible, holding my breath, my eyes on the wire staker painted orange to guide me, I was thankful when I came to dry ground!

An emergency road was later opened by the Principia picnic grounds to make it more convenient for the few people in my part of town. If it rained it was like the olden days, a mud road, as you had to drive through the open fields. The trip to Marie's was 3.3 miles.

At the time it seemed like a nightmare; now like a bad dream. Elsah looked like a war zone. With time and good volunteer help, it began to look better.

Nancy McDow
29 LaSalle Street

Nancy's grandfather came to Elsah in the late 1880's.

The Elsie Landing Restaurant

At the Elsie Landing we had a hard time during the early stages of the flood getting the word out that we were open. Pictures of Grafton gave people the impression that the entire Great River Road was under water. About the time we thought we had succeeded, the road was under water and very few people knew how to get here.

On July the seventeenth we realized we had to get our customers out and close, because we couldn't interfere with efforts to sandbag parking and save homes.

For five weeks I looked down from our home to see if the guardrail was showing on the River Road - then I came by golf cart, John-boat - and borrowed car to the temporary Post Office and out to check on Elsie!

After I could no longer walk to the restaurant, Lee Stickler and Bill Zeigler checked it for me. The water got halfway across the back parking lot, but we are grateful it did not get into the basement where we have our ovens and freezers.

Believe it or not, we still have people calling to see if they can get up the River Road!

Helen Crafton
Elsie Landing Restaurant
The restaurant opened in May, 1975.

Continued from Page 15

The Battles

The fight for the buildings went on unabated. The Fredericksons' house never was sandbagged because the ground around the house could not hold a sandbag wall so soon after the installation of a new sewage system. Marjorie Doerr next door had the same problem, though a big battle was waged trying to save her house. As Rick Dearborn remembers, "We could not keep ahead of it. We finally told her to leave. Before she left she had put things on blocks, like her refrigerator and the piano. When we shut the pumps off...in one hour there was two feet of water in the house. With the second crest everything was flooded."

The big battle was now focussed on the Holt House, the Mill Street Canal houses of Kinder and Taetz, the Green Tree Inn, the two Churches, the Post Office, and ultimately the Command Center itself. Though in the end the water entered every one of these buildings, the sandbag levees were able to keep the water out for many weeks and thus prevent the damage that long-standing water can inflict. The helpers, like mercenaries, moved from place to place. When they lost a battle, when one house 'went down,' they took

Dear Friends

A serious flood has not come to Elsie for some time, but when it did come recently, I was grateful for the spirit of the Elsie people.

When water, lights and telephone are cut off it seems time to make a move - but how? In my case, since my car couldn't go through the water, Ed Keller, with his four wheel jeep, drove me up over the hill and to Alton to meet other friends. While I was here though, I felt no lack of supply, as Ed and his wife brought food and Nancy McDow was ready to bring water and other things.

It is great to live in a community where people care about each other.

James Green
15 LaSalle Street
Jim came to Principia in 1941, and to Elsie proper in 1976.

1/17/75 3:00 PM Log - p. 2, 11/7/75

Jacky - 7" Mary - most critical now
Landy - 4" if now, but not strong
Helen - OK Can't take more at top
Womack - OK maybe back up plywood
Unterbrink - working out
Green Tree - OK
Hoej - OK let up support of bag
at end of street
near above water line

3:05 PM Collapse Personnel
Unit 8 (Keller) on shift through rest of weekend
Control Center at Civic Center -
Unit 24 - at Cemetery Unit 7 - gone
Unit 25 - Rick Dearborn Unit 8 - Cy

3:45 Lisa Dearborn call home

4:00 Jane Groom - please tell Rose
bread, rolls, soup are for dinner - donation

4:30 Jane Pfeifer trying to get Lorraine to deliver
to sand bag gravel - "begging" for delivery

4:45 Ruth Braden concerned about her back door

out the pumps and moved on. Days began at five in the morning and often did not end until early the next morning. One day ran into the next. The last days were almost panicky - everything went so fast. At night there was often no light because there was an electricity outage - and the electric pumps stood still while the water kept on coming up.

"There was a CIPS slowdown as the workers had a grievance and they did only the absolute minimum," David Pfeifer explained. The night the Kinder and Holt houses went under the electricity had gone out, too. Only in the Command Center were they able to keep pumps running because there was an emergency generator.

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July 31, 1993:

A Night to Remember

As one of the more stalwart flood fighters, Randy Kinder had been going it more-or-less alone for most of the summer. By the night of July 31st, he had accomplished a monumental undertaking: Randy's sandbag levee extended from the post office, completely across his front yard, and around to his garage. In places it was now over six feet high. For better than a month he had been working night and day tending an assortment of pumps, patching and building his wall, and was now attempting to slow numerous water boils that were surfacing around his property.

I offered to take a shift helping him out for a few hours so he could get some sleep. Standing directly behind a sandbag levee that high is an ominous experience. Just about the same time the night before, the Taetz had lost their equally high levee just across the street. As Randy proceeded to show me how to handle things, I was glad for the life preserver I had decided to wear. Just in case, we planned an escape route up the outside stairway leading to the second floor of his garage. Before retiring, Randy indicated a mark on his fence. "If the water gets to here," he said "come wake me up, we'll be in serious trouble."

About an hour after he went in, electrical power in the Village suddenly went off. Not wanting to wake Randy, I immediately got to work starting gasoline pumps to replace the useless electric ones. As the water crept up toward Randy's mark on the fence, I engaged more pumps. Hearing the considerable noise now being generated in his yard, Randy came out to see what was going on. Observing the closeness of the water to his mark, and the fact that all his pumps were running at full tilt, he made the decision to take a boat and get a spare pump he had reserved in the back of his truck. With the complete darkness, and our focus on our isolated struggle, we were not aware of how fast the river was coming up, nor of the new struggles underway at the Holt house, and the frantic efforts being engaged to save the Civic Center.

Randy and I were just getting ready to start the new pump when he yelled, "The levee broke!" and headed for the escape stairs. A thirty foot wide section of the sandbag wall directly in front of his house had disappeared. In the fraction of a second it took me to get off the wall, the water was already waist deep. Dodging pieces of fence and plywood, we made a dash for the stairs, getting to the top in time to see the water smash through his front door and fill the house.

Looking down through the windows we could still see the lit kerosene lamps on the kitchen table. With several gasoline pumps under water, our concern turned to the possibility of floating gasoline getting to the lamps and catching fire. Randy went into his house to pull them out, while I started pulling up submerged pumps.

With everything over, it was strangely peaceful, and in many ways a relief. Randy's war was now over, at least until the cleanup could begin. We emptied his freezer into a cooler and moved a few items around the house. I offered him a place to sleep, but he decided to just go upstairs in his flooded house and get some much needed rest.

As I floated the full cooler out like a boat, I was shocked to find that the water had completely surrounded the Civic Center and was headed further down Mill Street. The rapid rise now put our own garage and basement in jeopardy, and at 2:00 am, I headed home to begin flood preparations of our own.

Rick Dearborn
7 Valley Street

Rick and Lisa Dearborn moved to Elsie in 1988.

Saturday 7/31/93 cont'd

11:00 Anyone interested in getting surplus water at Elsie Township Bluffs will have to contact Clemons Wandell (416-3060).

4:30 FEMA paper stopped by and let us know of free legal work being offered and that the Red Cross is offering free cleaning supplies.

5:00 Mike Jolly called. Clemons & Sons says to expect at least 1 more foot by 7 am.

5:30 James Foster donated 20 bags of flour.

5:30 Our phone again to dial.

5:45 ~~Water~~ ~~Randy~~ ~~and~~ ~~me~~ ~~and~~ ~~the~~ ~~city~~

7 pm Elsie Bernal was consulted about lifting pumps in Methodist Church. Church people decided not to take action tonight. Will look at the situation in the morning.

8:30 PM Lost electricity - Cy & Jim Platten & Arno checked all pumps and put gas pumps in operation & the Civic Center on generator power.

11:15 Lost Randy Kinder - Holts taking on water - Cy taking down extra pump. Village power still out.

11:20

Etched in Memory

The month of July, 1993 is one which will forever haunt the memories of all those affected, directly or otherwise, by the Great Flood. Though the regular nightmares of soggy blankets and water covered floors are now behind us, I'm sure we will all have certain moments that will be etched in memory. Here's one of mine:

One morning (July 22nd?), at about 9am, after taking over "pump duty" from a devoted overnight Principia crew, I suspected more seepage water than usual on the dry side of my levee - pumps were running longer and more frequently, unable to keep up as before. I walked the length of my levee to the back of the Post Office; found no unusual seepage in the levee and no worsening ground boils in the Post Office yard. Somewhat relieved, I returned to my driveway (where my pumps were located), only to confirm my first suspicion. A 4 ft. diameter area of my driveway was "boiling" out of control; my heart began pounding as I knew a major rupture was imminent. To no avail, I tried to plug the boil with about 20 sandbags. The river seemed to laugh at me as the gurgling boil simply swallowed those bags and grew so much larger! Across the Mill St. "canal", my neighbors (the Taetz) were dealing with their own problems. I yelled for help! As they called for more help and sandbags, I frantically began looking for more pumps, and praying that the boil would not grow any larger. Within about twenty minutes, I had two additional pumps barely keeping up with the increasing seepage, with more help and sandbags beginning to arrive.

To my surprise and dismay, the efforts of all those involved that morning were somehow able to avert the "imminent" rupture of my levee. And, although the final failure of my levee was only postponed to a later date, the events of the morning awakened me to the dark reality of this living nightmare; though certainly not broken, my confidence had cracked a bit.

Thanks to all the people who seemingly came from nowhere that morning, and not just to those who helped with the seepage problem, but especially to those who packed-up and evacuated the contents of my house, all within 30 minutes time! What an effort!

Thanks to all, neighbors, friends and strangers alike! Truly, what would I have done without them?

Randy Kinder
44 Mill Street
Randy came to Elsah in 1984.

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The Mail

Amidst all this, 'the mail must go through!' When it became too difficult to reach the Post Office, Betty Clark, our Postmaster, decided to move the office to higher grounds. On the 26th of July she moved the necessary shelving and counters to her own home, and installed the evacuated Post Office in her roomy two-car garage. To some of the tired and overworked villagers who were surrounded day and night by the menacing floodwaters and later by the drab remains of their homes and yards, the trip to the new office - seeing green lawns and flowers - was 'like a little vacation.'

The Last Days

The very last days of July, when the river rose so quickly, the last houses fell like dominoes. The Taetz House went first, early in the morning of July 31st. Randy Kinder's house followed some hours later, in the evening. As Jerry Taetz tells it: "The Mississippi was supposed to crest at 36 1/2 feet, and it did. On the 29th of July we built all the walls at 37 feet, which would have been high enough, but, late afternoon of the thirtieth the water kept rising. It came up about an inch an hour. We could not keep up with it." The sudden fast rise was due to the additional water coming in from the Missouri River which had changed course and had joined the Mississippi right across at Portage des Sioux. When the wall around the Taetz House finally gave way, the water-wall rushing in almost swept Jerry with it into the basement of his house. As a neighbor later remarked, "There was a shout, then darkness, and stillness. No more pump sounds, and that is ominous." In the early hours of the first of August the Green Tree Inn wall caved in, and MaryAnn Pitchford's breath was "knocked out when the pumps stopped. In less than a minute the water came through and pushed the doors in." The Post Office flooded and the Holt House followed.

At the Holt House that night, where Preston Larimer, Richard Booth and Marty DeWindt, together with Ellen and John Thompson who were there part of the time, and many others, were working, they made a conscious decision not to let the water rush in and crush the walls, but to let it come up slowly, by not pumping anymore and then breaking down the wall in several places. They had had difficulties with boils too, spots where the water comes bubbling up on the other side of the sandbag wall. The ground was all mushy, and the basement walls were in danger of collapsing. Jerry Taetz had the same problem at his house.

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The Post Office

Each day as the water rose I would have to think about a point where I would have to say, "Okay, if it gets this deep I will have to move the post office out and then where do I move it to."

Each day I watched the water rise and I measured the depth of it several times a day. Over and over I was told that the water would not get into the post office. It was not predicted to come up that high. I knew I would have to leave before the water came over the porch. Where would I go? I was told not to move into any place too close to the water because I would possibly have to move again. The postal service left it totally up to me.

Walkways were built to gain access to the porch from the street. The water rose over the walkways. A bridge was built through the bushes and across the carport. On Monday, July 26, 1993, the water was one inch below the top of the porch. When wet, the plywood bridge to the carport would get slippery. Access was difficult and unsafe for customers when crossing the sandbags and the slippery bridge.

I was in contact with St. Louis daily. When I called them on the morning of July 26th, I told them I was going to move out and that I was moving to my garage. It was my decision and this was what I had decided.

At 1:00 p.m. my husband and my son and I began moving just the necessities out of the building. We set up saw horses with plywood tops to work from. Each day I would go back to the post office and pick up additional supplies which were needed in order to conduct business from the garage. After a couple of days the water started down. The driveway in front of the post office was dry. I felt bad because I thought I had moved out and I had not needed to.

Each day during the noon hour I would bring mail to the school building which was the command post. I did this for approximately two weeks, until the water subsided and there were no longer people working (helping sandbag).

Sunday August 1, 1993 at about 2:00 a.m., the post office was flooded. There was approximately 13 inches of water on top of the floor.

On August 6th, we were able to go back into the building. The tiles on the floor were coming up. The desk in the lobby was coming apart. The counter line was coming apart also. The doors were swelled from the water. It was very difficult to open the doors and impossible to shut them once they were opened.

On August 6th a bigger task began - to clean up. Each day we would haul truckloads out to the garage. There we would clean and some things would be painted so they could be used and also would be ready to be put back into the post office when it became available. Everything had to be removed from the building so they could begin to repair. The next problem was what to do with all this stuff. Little by little we removed the saw horses and plywood tabletops from our makeshift post office and replaced them with the actual counter line and letter and flat cases from the original post office.



By the end of September the garage even looked like a post office, but there was no heat and it was getting cold.

On October 2nd, we moved back into the newly redone post office. It was not completely finished, but the furnace did work!

Betty Clark
187 A Cemetery Road.
Betty's grandparents were born in Elsah, and so was she.

Photos: Left: Postmaster Betty Clark with the plaque presented to her on September 17, 1993 by Mary Evans, the Postmaster Coordinator of the St. Louis Area, in recognition of her performance during the flood; Above: The temporary post office at Betty's home.

PHOTOS: INGE MACK

Faith and Hope

Elsah Flood 1993

Our most lasting memories of the Flood in Elsal are the heroic efforts of the scores or perhaps hundreds of willing volunteers who did so much in trying to save many homes and other property. While the massive sandbagging effort did not repel the river crest, many homes were wet for much shorter periods and this resulted in less damage and less mud to remove.

The foresight in removing many contents before the river entered the homes, was indeed a blessing to those whose homes were invaded. We are still learning the names of those many helpers who sandbagged our homes, manned the pumps, stood neck deep in the river water to repair leaks, and who worked diligently to remove contents by putting the small items upstairs, and who found storage areas for the heavy items. We hesitate to mention names of those who helped so much, because we know that many names would be left out. Almost every day we learn of someone else who helped in some way at our house. But we are attempting to personally thank those who did a part in saving Mill Street. Many times we have had the opportunity to reply when asked about the damage to our house "the removal of contents was so complete that we didn't even lose a paper clip."

The river crested at 43 feet in our first floor which has required almost total reclamation - floors, walls, woodwork, doors, ceilings, electric heaters and wiring. Five pillars on the porch needed repair, touch-up painting of brick, repainting inside and out. Landscaping will include new bushes, trees, grass, picket fences, walks, driveway and new topsoil.

We moved back into our home in late January, and have worked each day to further refine the recovery process. We anticipate several more months of diligent efforts.

Shortly after the river crested and water left our house and yard, Betsy bought two yellow chrysanthemum plants for the front porch to replace the flower baskets we usually have there. She said she was going to call them *Faith and Hope*. A few days later after reviewing all the work that needed to be done we both decided that *Time and Money* might be more appropriate names.

It is good to see the evidences of recovery slowly coming to Elsal.

Henry Holt and Betsy Read Holt
3 Mill Street

Around 1930, Betsy's parents bought 3 and 5 Mill Street as weekend homes, and renovated them during 1947 - 48.

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When the water finally started coming in at the Command Center Saturday evening, July 31st, a regular war ensued. Water had already come into the bottom level with the parquet floor, but now it came in through the sink in the kitchen and the sewage system in the public facilities. An ugly-smelling odor pervaded the building. For a while the pumps were not working and Arno and others helping were unable to plug the drains. Eventually, at about two or three in the early morning, they called Jane. Together they moved all the filing cabinets with the Village Papers and Archives out; first up to the hall and later to Hutchinson House to safety. The Command Center itself was moved to the Maintenance Building, while the Boat Coordinator's office went upstairs to the Museum.

As soon as the pumps were working again, early Sunday morning, they were able to get the water out of the lower level and Arno went in with the big shop-vac to clean the parquet floor. It was then that it was announced that the water would go up at least another foot before the river would crest, and the walls around the Center weren't high enough for that - and here was Arno vacuuming the parquet floor! It was pretty ridiculous he felt. But during the day the wall was raised again and the workers succeeded in plugging the drain holes; and they were able to hold it through the crest. So basically that building was saved!



Faith and Hope.

PHOTO: INGE MACK

Sunday Morning, August First

As Nancy McDow later mentioned - that Sunday morning, August first, when it was so still in the village, when there was no sound of pumps working, or of trucks or backhoes moving, she knew it was the end of the battle. The sound of the working pumps had been a reassuring sound for a long five to six weeks. It had meant that the houses in which the pumps were

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Elsah Women

During the Summer Flood of 1993 I experienced a new awareness of Elsah Women. An extraordinary group! Inspired and influenced by devastation sounds contradictory - unless you were here. The strength of these women is ever present but through my personal experience (and awareness) I was touched by these women.

Our historic buildings are more than material and properties - they're our homes. They are our homes of the '90's as well as buildings with a personal history of over one hundred years. I recall Charles Hosmer saying to me, "the people of the Village - are the Village." The loss of Charles Hosmer during the summer flood only added to my personal despair of the flood. I recall feeling that I was losing "Elsah". It was a very sick feeling in my heart. Grief was surfacing beyond my control over my historic home, the Music Hall, our furnishings, my business, our neighbors. Family members were passing on, and the men were getting very tired.

Then Suzy Nordeen gave us her home for awhile to recover; I recall of Jeri Hosmer sandbagging in unbearable heat; Jane Pfeifer seemed to be everywhere - and ready to respond to the personal need as well as the need of the majority; Marie Cresswell was the kind voice I reached at the Command Post to relay information to concerned families and others; Eleanor Barnal kept the Civic Center kitchen open and covered with volunteers to feed the workers; Mary Ann Pitchford gave me a truck full of sandbags at 11:30 pm. when I could no longer walk through the water, which was four feet deep behind our home where Jerry was sandbagging relentlessly, and Sarah Perkins said it was O.K. to cry.

Who packed up our personal belongings and moved our furniture - the Christian Science Church group. After the flood, the worst seemed to surface, or it was just the tragic reality. A woman from the Alton Methodist Church took the hammer from my hand and said, "Let me knock the wall down, I've always wanted to do this." I had to leave to keep from being physically ill.

Hope evolved through the kindness of others, and what a wonderful spirit of love too prevailed in spite of the loss. All the faces are in my heart, I don't even know some of the names - but they helped me to overcome despair. It would be impossible to list all the names of those in Elsah I do know were so giving - each one is significant and special - truly the tireless, the caretakers, and my small attempt here to acknowledge them has to be strong enough to say thank you to you all and in no way to ignore the wonderful hardworking men that gave unconditionally as well.

I simply tried to go to sleep one night and with these thoughts of "Elsah Women" - Past and Present, I could see a photograph of a group of us here in the Village Hall representing the Historic Elsah Foundation, government, churches, businesses, education, environment, art and culture - that picture says 'Elsah' to me, and it shall be again. I think Josephine Keller would be most proud.

Patty Taetz

Patty and Jerry Taetz

43 Mill Street

Patty and Jerry came to Elsah in 1984.

The Green Tree Inn During the Flood of 1993

The Green Tree Inn had never been flooded before, and actually, the street in front of the inn had always been dry. The main flood came in July and we had an eight foot high sandbag wall protecting the inn for five weeks. But the water had been against the sandbag levee for so many weeks that the last 25 hour surge of water broke over the top at 2:00 a.m. Sunday morning, August 1st. Every building on Mill Street which was protected by sandbags was lost that night. The Mississippi at that point had flooded to eleven miles wide from Elsah to the other side of St. Charles, Missouri. That night the river was rising at a rate of more than an inch an hour. If you would stand on the sidewalk directly in front of the inn, you would be under twelve feet of water.

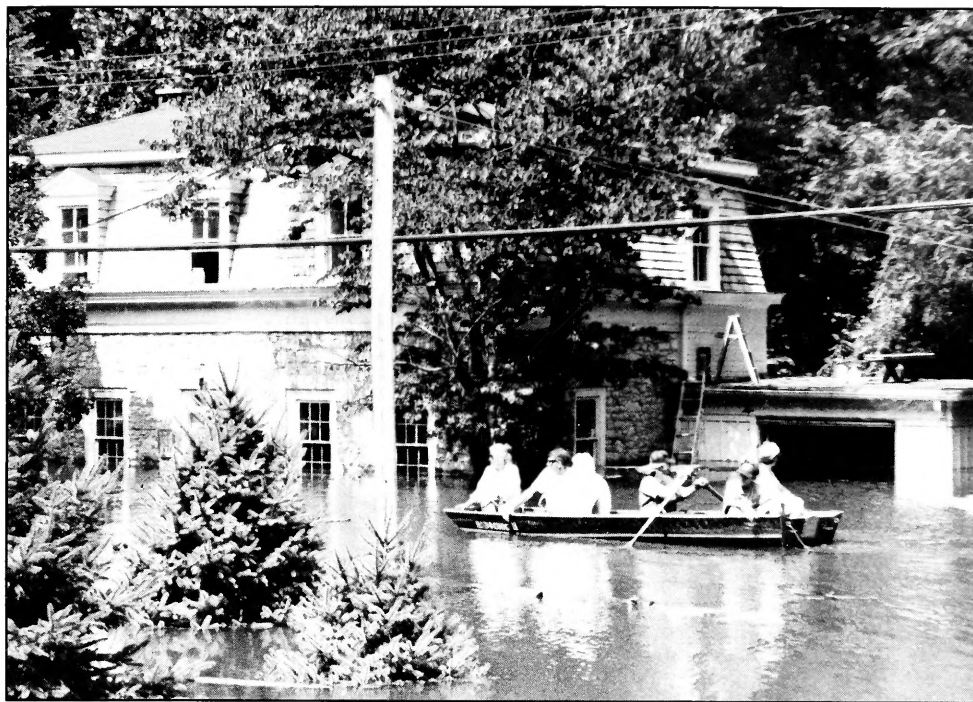
We live in the former Methodist Parsonage, built in 1859. It faces the little Methodist Church back in the valley. Our home was sandbagged and we had to go in and out by boat.

The emotional strain people endured day after day, week after week, month after month of living under these conditions cannot be expressed. Out of this tragedy, wonderful friendships have been made with total strangers who came to this village and other river communities offering cleaning supplies and their labor and prayers and moral support.

Mary Ann Pitchford

3 Valley Street

Mary Ann and Michael Pitchford came to Elsah in 1977.



Boating through Elsah on Sunday, August first, 1993

PHOTO: MARY NORTH

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installed were 'still holding.' Now it was over. Yet, with the silence came a sense of relief, and the one quiet moment before all thoughts and energies had to be refocused on cleaning up and rebuilding. Travelling in the village in a rowboat that quiet day, through the deep green shadows cooling the muddy-brown riverwater, while small dried leaves gently landed on the water surface and quietly floated away, could almost be called romantic. The soft splashing of the paddles in the water and the ebullient birdsong all around only added to this illusion. But passing mirror images of structures where none had been before, structures that had been homes and now stood empty, brought the reality back in focus.

The rampaging river was now in retreat. It had fought for its natural boundaries, its natural spaces of expansion, which it had been denied, and in the process had invaded communities it used to be friendly with. Elsah in the 1890's "advertised itself as the only town in Illinois within a hundred miles north of St. Louis that had a waterfront always above the floods." (Paul Williams, "The Superflood of '73," Elsah

History, #5). It is possible that, until a comprehensive study of the total Mississippi River Basin with its floodplains and levee systems has been made, we can expect other forays by the once Elsah-friendly river into our territory. And we'd better be prepared.

Water Outage

Ironically, the river's final crest, when the end of its assault was in sight, created an additional discouraging situation, which prolonged and intensified the flood ordeal. The Alton plant of the Illinois-American Water Company finally flooded, and left the area people who were surrounded by muddy floodwater, without any clean water to use in the house. This situation lasted two long weeks. It was brutal, as someone said. Water tanks and supply stations were set up all over the area. Elsah residents could get water at the Township Building or at the Maintenance Building where the Red Cross and the Salvation Army distributed drinking water. Principia College had to call off its Summer Session in the middle of the session, but kept the dining service going for those helping in the village with the flood and the clean up.

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Elsah United Methodist Church—

A Thank You

The Methodist Church at No. 2 Valley Street had some flood damage when water reached its highest crest on Aug. 1st. The openings in the wall were sandbagged, but the water went over the wall. Water left its mark on the first board of the frame building, letting us know how level the 1874 building was, even the additions. Replacing all furnace duct work in a crawl space is done. We had a hard time getting someone to do this. We were back in church in 3 weeks, but without heat or air. We dressed for the weather though. We still have some repairs to do.

Sandbagging was a 24 hr a day job. It's amazing how the community worked together and with the volunteers who came from all over the United States to help. Feeding these groups was done at the Civic Center (old school house). I don't know how all these people found us, but we're thankful they did. Food came from the community and surrounding areas. I will not try to name everyone as I might miss someone.

When we were close to crest, we had to evacuate the school and take things to the maintenance shed. When the Illinois-American water plant in Alton went down, water was hauled in and then later tankers came to the Elsie Township building where we took jugs and picked up water.

Thank you to all the volunteers and also to those that helped me.

Eleanor Barnal
140 Mill Street
Eleanor came to Elsie in 1941.



Church entrance on August 1, 1993

PHOTO: MARY NORTH

A Wedding

As I rowed a johnboat past the front door of the Elsie Methodist Church on the morning of Sunday, August 1, 1993, I noticed that no one was going to church. In fact, the flood waters were lapping at the top step (the water reaching finally to just BELOW the floor of the church) and I again gave thanks that we were not using the church that day. You see, our daughter, Julia North, and her husband, Tom Boerth, were married there on June 19th, just 2 weeks before the river waters began to come up the creek. Following the service performed by Bill, an ordained minister, the young couple stood on that top step for a storybook portrait. In the sad weeks that followed, we often looked at the photos from that lovely day, to celebrate and to remind ourselves of happier, peaceful days in Elsie. I know their marriage will survive similar crises, but I am glad that they left the church that day in a charming carriage instead of in a rusty johnboat.

Reverend William and Mary North
19 Valley Street.

The Norths came to Elsie in 1989.



*The Methodist Church Entrance, June 19, 1993
with the newlyweds.*

PHOTO: MARY NORTH

Remembering the Flood of '93

Our memories of the flood are a rich mix of gratitude (the unsolicited offers of help), suspense ("Will it go back down again now or will it finally come into the kitchen this time?" – It did come in.), and perhaps naive reassurance ("A year from now we'll see it as a big adventure.").

Jane Pfeifer must have put in 25 hours of work a day before, during and after the high water! Whether it was supplying advice and pumps for the crawl space or just wading through three feet of water by the Methodist Church to mail a letter for us, she was instant in taking care of the least casual inquiry; she was everywhere, knew everything, and anticipated the unexpected. What a Seabee she would have made! ("...the impossible takes a little longer.") When our house finally became uninhabitable, Edith Hammond, Jane's mother, having moved to the college for Summer Session, invited us to move across the street to her house; our last things came out of her garage in mid-February! There are not words enough to thank her for her timely generosity.

A crowd of summer sessioners moved most of our kitchen and dining room stuff upstairs. Bob Bell and other men from the college took the doors off their hinges and carried them upstairs to the front hall; the big college truck with a hydraulic lift was used to move our big table, the chest freezer, the refrigerator, a huge Dutch armoire, and some other heavy things up and across the street to garages lent by Edith Hammond and Jim Green. After the flood, Arno List and Ben Schmidt moved endless boxes of stuff out of the utility room and up to the garages so the floor, counters and cabinets could be entirely torn out and rebuilt, and when Jim Green needed his garage Arno alone emptied it and moved two or three pickup loads down to our garage. Russ Allison brought materials and tools and disconnected the downstairs toilet and plugged the drain and later supplied a long piece of plastic tubing for pumping out the crawl space.

During the high water period our neighbors took the initiative to do innumerable nice things. Nancy McDow brought us our mail several times, as did Ed Keller; the latter, aided by Genie, was for quite a while our only link with the outside world, plowing through high water by the two churches in his Jeep with people, mail and groceries. Marie Cresswell, Elaine Follis, Sarah Batzer, Suellen Girard, Nancy McDow and a lot of others staffed an emergency phone around the clock in the Civic Center room under the museum, dispensing information (everything from expected crest levels to where Jane was) and handling every kind of emergency. Bill Bross rendered enormous technical service in moving mechanical and electrical things up to safety.

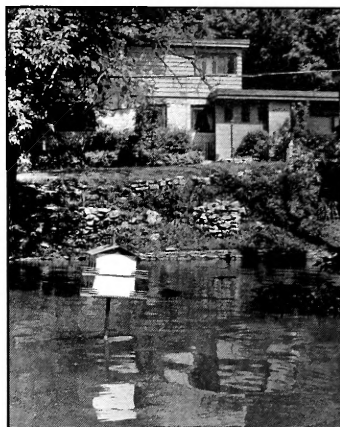
During the highest point of the flood Jim Green and I drove our cars out one day via the picnic grounds and across woods and fields to the Chautauqua road, and coming back we each got stuck, a couple of hours apart, on a muddy incline in the woods. Jeff Dunnagan came up and pulled me out, and Arno later did the same for Jim.

There always seemed to be crowds all over the Village filling and moving sandbags. Volunteers came from near and far: former student Ron Musselman cleaning up with a Bobcat, tourists (a couple who had enjoyed a stay with the Doerrs at the Corner Nest) all came back for several days to help with the cleanup.

One huge cause for gratitude was the unexpected money that began coming in even before the water went down. Checks in very helpful amounts arrived from Principia, the Christian Science Church in Elsah, a group of other Christian Science churches in the St. Louis area and of course F.E.M.A. Several times after repairs were begun and we had drained our bank account and cashed in just about everything else, a timely check arrived out of the blue and pulled us back temporarily from the brink of financial insolvency.

There were endless phone calls from friends all over the country and even from France expressing concern and good wishes. Most of them, of course, came before we had to move out and became unreachable at our regular number, so they got a reassuring picture of our status that was reversed by later events. The air was thick with meaningless statistics, predictions and rumors about crest levels, levee breaks and the like, but none of them told us how much water there was going to be over our ground floor. Our personal gauge was one of Mrs. Trovillion's bird houses atop a very high pole and clearly visible from Mrs. Hammond's house. For several days all we could see of that bird house was the little finial on its roof.

The daily jaunts to Betty Clark's home out on Cemetery Road, where she had installed the entire Elsah Post Office in her



Maude Trovillion's birdhouse.

PHOTO: GRETCHEN BATZ

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Cleanup

All the while the river kept retreating to its banks. Within one week it was out of Elsay - 'almost as though someone pulled a plug.' By August 9, the river was at the 1973 flood level, and by the 19th it was finally within its banks. For a long time, though, there was water around that the ground could not absorb.

Every Saturday after the floodwaters had left Elsay there was a work day, a cleanup day. The Village Board had decided to have dumpsters for public use in which everybody was allowed to dump his or her trash, as opposed to just throwing it in the street and having big trucks pick it up later. "We thought," Jane remembers, "one dumpster will take care of this, and just like, you know - 'just 500 bags' - but we had them all over the village. We spent thousands of dollars. And even though we were reimbursed for part of the cost, we still had to pay a certain amount per dumpster." These cleanup Saturdays lasted through the months of August and September. There was no shortage of help. Ron Musselman came from his home in the East one weekend during the cleanup and was having a great time with Principia's bobcat moving sandbags off

*Prin Students helping Marge with
the painting and the cleanup.*

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PHOTO: INGE MACK



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garage, were an adventure at first, an impossibility when the high section of LaSalle Street was entirely cut off, and finally a very pleasant excursion through the prettiest parts of Jersey County.

(Paula recounts the following:) We finally believed the water would invade us too late to move out any more than the major pieces of furniture and objects stored in the base cabinets. So the china close (a large walk-in FULL of a lifetime's collection) was left alone. The water came to just over the lowest shelf. We figured that since dishes can be easily washed the flood couldn't do too much damage to anything.

After the flood receded, of course, everything had to be moved out so carpenters and painters could redo the floors and walls. They were ready to start, so we had to find packers fast. We tried all the major movers in the area, but no one could come before three or four weeks - far too long for us to wait. We tried small companies but they too were booked. At last we found one in Belleville who had just earlier that morning had a cancellation and who came the following day! Two men spent six hours non-stop filling eight or ten large movers' cartons with carefully wrapped china and odd bits. And for half the price other companies had quoted. Talk about an answer to prayer!

So now, only half a year later, and with almost all the bills paid, we can say it was a big adventure, one we'll always remember, when Elsay and its friends were seen at their best.

Ned and Paula Bradley
The Old Village Inn
14 LaSalle Street

Ned knew Elsay from his student days at Principia in 1939, and came back to teach in 1946, while Paula came in 1948.

From the Ashes

One of life's more eerie experiences is to peer into your house from a boat riding halfway up your picture window! Our historic 1877 house, situated on the Elsah flood plain, endured many floods, but only in 1993 did water actually enter the main living space. We watched in disbelief as waters continued to violate our most private sanctuary. (The water finally crested to five feet in our living room.) Fortunately, thanks to the generous foresight of the nearby college, our personal effects, furniture and utilities largely had been moved out or upstairs. This was the first of an outpouring of tender care from friends, neighbors, and until then, strangers who have unceasingly given their efforts and resources to lighten our burden during and after the flood.

Our house was cleared and cleaned, from murky basement through the main living area, by the hard work of these good samaritans. For example, an Alton church group that ranged from teenagers to senior citizens formed a chain to pass out accumulated junk from the basement. Waterlogged and coated with filth, these soggy masses completely filled a dumpster by the time the job was finished in one morning, leaving the basement clean and scrubbed as never before. One vignette: as the wet lumps of unidentified items were passed from hand to hand, a hard object was detected which, when extracted, turned out to be a beautiful ceramic figurine of a ballerina (a LLadro) which survived without damage. Speak of the Phoenix rising out of the ashes! Since then, reconstruction has proceeded steadily following a plan which brings out some historic aspects previously untouched. Two main qualities, then, appear to us to have emerged in the flood's aftermath: One is a sense of unity in our Village from caring for and sharing each other's challenges, linked with an awareness of belonging to a community extending far beyond our region. Second, the conviction that our Village when finally reconstructed will reflect improvements in our historic appearance that reveal our past better than ever before. In fact, this could now be our Village Motto - "Elsah, better than ever!"

Dick and Peggy Ouderkirk

The Buggy Shop, 22 Mill Street

Dick and Peggy bought their Elsah home in 1978, and moved there in 1979.

Flood Insurance

As the flood waters crept further into our village, Jim and I found ourselves encouraging others to purchase flood insurance. Two Maple had insurance, in fact we had already called our local agent to begin the paperwork since we knew there would be some foundation damage.

Two weeks later our agent called to say he was embarrassed and sorry to say that our policy had been cancelled some two years earlier. The new mortgager neglected to pay our yearly premium. We, on the other hand, had been faithfully paying into escrow the needed amount.

How ironic, our neighbors now had coverage and we were being told we didn't! In addition to daily work in the Village, we spent countless hours on the phone with the Federal Banking Commission, an Omaha Bank Vice President, and the Illinois Insurance Commissioner who was steadfast in his efforts to resolve this problem.

It is now March, 1994 and we are within two months of completion of the restoration and rebuild at 2 Maple. The mortgage lender has admitted liability and has sent all but the final payment of our former coverage.

Another interesting occurrence needs to be mentioned. About a year before the flood, we found our neighbor, Chuck Hosmer, standing in our backyard with some papers. He was counting foundation stones on the back side of our house to verify that the 1900's photo he had just received was truly a picture of 2 Maple. None of us could believe what we saw - original shutters, an annex toward the alley, and a back porch with gingerbread galore.

The rebuild at 2 Maple has enabled us to reinforce structural problems, replace faulty heating and electricity, and in addition to this, reinstate the exterior look of the 1900's photo. What an amazing evolution for this place we call home! We will ever be grateful to our mayor, friends, neighbors, IHPA, and anonymous volunteers for their steadfast support.

Joanne and Jim Evans

2 Maple Street

The Evans came to Principia in 1982, and bought their house in the village in 1986.

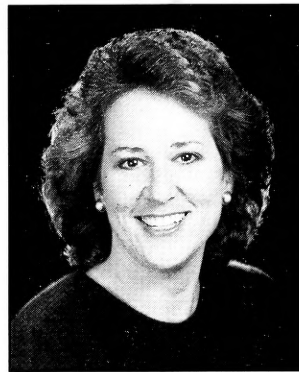
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private property onto the street. He knew how to handle one; he used to have one himself during his Elsay days. The bags were then hauled away and used as landfill. Through the JTPA (Job Training Partnership Act in which Congress allocated some money for those who were dislocated through the flood) Elsay was given the help of two young men, who spent two weeks cleaning the creek and the spring in the park. On weekends large groups would come; Prin students helped and members of several different churches came to help. Especially supportive were the members of the Episcopal Church in Alton, the Alton Metropolitan Methodist Church and the Jeff Methodist Church. And to top it all off, United Way organized an enormous cleanup day on the eleventh of September. It was a big effort, with large crews, and was very effective.

Financial and Other Help

Many home owners, especially along Mill Street, suffered extensive damage. Not many were covered by flood insurance, and the expense of rebuilding is high. The federal government provides assistance through FEMA, the Federal Emergency Management Assistance program, which according to Jane, "in coordination with other agencies gives individuals temporary rent assistance, food stamps and then grants to make their homes safe, sanitary and secure. The federal government, recognizing the extent of damage to historic communities, made available funds to assist those communities through two channels: the state historic preservation agencies, in the case of Elsay, the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The village of Elsay received assistance in two ways from the Trust program. First, an individual structural engineer, experienced in historic buildings, inspected all the buildings immediately after the flood and made recommendations to the home owners. Second, the Village applied for and received a grant to provide planning and design assistance in rebuilding buildings affected by the flood. Using this grant, the Village has hired Jack Luer to provide this assistance at no cost to the property owner."

To date, the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency in Springfield has distributed 14 flood grant awards in Elsay. One was given to Historic Elsay Foundation for the restoration of the Farley Music Hall on Mill Street. Farley's was in danger of collapse after the flood, and needed a lot of work. The Hall was in private hands, though, and no state grant money may be given for the restoration of a public building in private hands. It was suggested Historic Elsay Foundation purchase the



Hollace Smith Emrich

Elsah Flood Restoration Benefit Concert

*Hollace Smith Emrich – Soprano
Terree Shofner – Piano*

*September 12, 1993 3:00 p.m.
1630 Sheridan Road – Lake Room*

G. Bizet Ms. Emrich

*To Help Restore Elsay, Illinois
A Flooded Mississippi River Town*

*The Philip Smith Family
warmly invites you to a
Benefit Concert given by*

*Hollace Smith Emrich – Soprano
and
Terree Shofner – Piano*

Christian Science Church

Following five months of extensive reconstruction, the members of the Elsay Christian Science Church invited its friends and neighbors to join them in a celebration of joyous renewal at a hymn sing on March 6th. The Great Flood of 1993 is over but the friendships that were made over the sand piles, the memories of the hard work, the caring concern expressed within this community, and the outpouring of love and support for this community from far and wide, will last for a lifetime.

Marie Oleson, Clerk

The first service in the Christian Science Church was held in December, 1942. The enlarged structure was ready in 1984.

building and be its sponsor. Thanks to a generous gift from an anonymous donor the Foundation was able to buy it and receive a grant. Work on it will start shortly.

Locally, financial relief for everyone touched by the flood came in the form of gifts from Principia College and the Christian Science Church which both had received contributions to this end. The Methodist Church in Elsah also was given a check by World Vision. Generous contributions to the Village were also received from several former and present Elsah families. Union Electric donated \$2000. Elsah, as one of the flooded communities in the greater Alton area, was recipient of some money from the Glen Campbell benefit concert, The Alton Relief Concert, which was organized by the Wedge Bank. The Village Board decided to donate that money to the Salvation Army and earmarked it for Elsah area needs. More financial relief for the village came recently in the form of a check for over \$5000 from a benefit concert organized in Chicago by Mrs. Barbara Smith, in which her daughter Hollace Emrich sang. This money will go towards a restoration project of one of the public buildings in Elsah. At this time contributions in excess

of \$17,000 have come in to the Village of Elsah – and this figure does not include FEMA nor State Preservation money. All this financial support is greatly appreciated.

In spite of the hardships the flood created for the Elsah villagers, and considering all those helpers who came and worked long hours in that hot sun, it is remarkable how well everything went. Much that is positive came to light. The flood experience showed that there is a strong sense of community and co-operation; that people realize what Elsah and living in Elsah means to each and everyone; how precious that experience is. And after the flood, as all energies focused on rebuilding, the opening up of soggy floors and walls revealed many structural problems that needed attention and could have created difficulties in the future if not taken care of now. Dick Ouderkirk is right in claiming, "Elsah is going to be better than ever." As is evident in the accompanying quilt pieces, gratitude for all the good shown and received is the dominant theme. So, one may say that the flood left Elsah with a renewed spirit.

Ingeborg H. Mack

Financial Help The first payment of federal historic preservation flood assistance funds in Illinois was paid on February 23, 1994, right here in Elsah, to Richard and Marguerite Ouderkirk for rehabilitation work done on their house at 22 Mill Street. Attending the little ceremony were Representative Thomas Ryder and Senator Vince Demuzio, Mayor Jane Pfeifer, a member each of the Village and Historic Elsah Foundation Boards, Jack Luer, the St. Louis restoration architect, the Jack Snyders who had so lovingly taken in the Ouderkirks, and other Elsah residents. Representing the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency were Director Susan Mogerman, and Grant Manager James Walsh with his assistant, Marti Latimore.

Director Mogerman presented a \$12,846 check to the Ouderkirks, reminding everyone present that, "Although the flood was a national disaster, these grant funds insure that it won't be a disaster for Illinois history."

According to David Blanchette, "The Illinois funds are part of a \$5 million grant from the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, that was shared among the eight flood-stricken states and the National Trust for Historic Preservation for historic preservation disaster relief projects..."

To qualify for these grants, the property must have been damaged by floodwaters during 1993 and must be a National Historic Landmark, listed in the National Register of Historic Places, or be a contributing structure in a National Register Historic District. The property must be located in a county that has been declared a Federal Disaster Area."

A delightful luncheon, given by Jane Pfeifer at the Elsah Landing Restaurant, followed the presentation.



L. to R.: Mayor Pfeifer, Representative Ryder, Richard Ouderkirk, Director Mogerman, Marguerite Ouderkirk, and Senator Demuzio.

PHOTO: ERIC MACK



The Village of Elsal as seen from directly over the Command Center, August 1, 1993

PHOTO: NIM GODFREY, IL